PEN & INK

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M.A.

Faith
from
DAD.
Xmas
1925

PEN AND INK

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Twelve Practical Talks
on the Art of Writing English Prose

BY
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PREFACE

In putting together these twelve little chapters on the writing of English prose, and these ten little studies of great modern writers, I have endeavoured to produce something practical, something that will be of real help to all those who wish to write—both those who realize the possibilities and importance of style, but have not yet acquired any facility in expressing their thoughts, and those who, though able to write themselves, through lack of experience hardly feel competent to teach others.

The book deals with the writing of English prose in many and varied forms; but in it I have avoided laying down the law, partly because I have no right to do so, partly because a personal style is not to be attained by obeying rules other than the simplest rules of grammar, nor by forcing one's ideas into stereotyped forms. I have tried to suggest and to stimulate—that is all; for long experience in the teaching of English has shown me that to do more than this is to hinder rather than to help. In the end the would-be writer must teach himself.

The little studies of the works of modern writers are not in any way didactic. These have been written with the object of stimulating the reader to study the methods and results of those who are recognized as masters in the art.

Guy N. Pocock.

December 1924.

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CHAPTER I

On Observation

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On Observation

When one sets out to compose a little book of 'talks' on the writing of English Prose, the first thing to make up one's mind about is the kind of persons who would read such talks in the hope of learning something of practical use. I imagine my readers in two classes—whether at school or not is neither here nor there. There are those who have mastered the main difficulties of expression and have achieved a style of their own, but have not, perhaps, had much experience in teaching those who are less competent. Others have something to say, but find a difficulty in hitching ideas into the form of effective words. One so often hears people complain, "I know what I *mean*, but I can't put it into words." It is this baffling unfamiliarity with the medium of expression that we have to overcome.

Prose-writing is the subject of these chapters. I imagine myself asking my unseen classes, What is the first requisite? "Pen, ink and paper" might be put forward as a suggestion. Well, there is something in that. It often happens that the writing down of an idea or two on a clean sheet will jog the imagination—will give one an intellectual fillip, as it were—and off one goes. But more often the clean white sheet stares blankly back without inspiration—and there is no voice, neither any that answers.

"One must have something to say" is another possible suggestion. That again is true, for no one wants to wade through a plethora of platitudes or a huddle of superfluous information. But it is not enough to have something to say if you do not know how to say it.

"A big vocabulary, then." True, one must have a reasonably large number of words at instant command; but vocabulary is not the first thing needful, for one may flood an audience with a torrent of verbosity and yet fail to give pleasure or carry conviction. What *is* the first thing, then? Is it taste? Is it scholarship, or imagination, or self-confidence? It is none of these—though all are valuable. The first thing of all is the power of clear thinking. Think clearly, and all these things shall be added unto you—style, and power, and confidence in yourself. Clear thinking is the basis of good writing and convincing speech, and it is a faculty that can be trained. Accurate *Observation* is the key. In everyday life most of us are content to think in smudgy pictures. One may pass a tree a hundred times—yet if one is asked to describe it accurately one has to go back again and examine it. The hundred-and-first time one really *looks at* the tree. You may dislike a face, a pudding, or a personality and, as in the classical instance of the distaste for Dr. Fell, "the reason why you cannot tell," until you *observe* accurately. Then you know why.

You may train yourself to observe accurately instead of vaguely, as the Scouts play Kim's game, and the more accurately you observe, the more clearly you will think. That is the first half—and at least the smudgy pictures have become sharp and clear-cut. Next, one must get into the habit of thinking clearly in *words*—consciously, and many times a day—so that at any moment one may express an observation in speech, or set an idea on paper, precisely and without distortion. This practice of thinking clearly and accurately in *words* is half the secret of writing, and it has this advantage, that it disturbs no one, as the piano does, and it irritates no one, like vegetarianism. Moreover, you can practise it at any time. Practise it on your way to work or school. Try it in your bath.

Most people have the power of 'hearing in their head'—

of imagining the sound of the written or printed word as if it were read aloud. If you notice—accurate observation again !—you will probably find on reading a friend's letter that you can hear his voice, as it were, reading the letter aloud. Generally, however, it is your own voice which you hear in imagination, as you will find if you 'think' the first verse of the National Anthem, for instance. Now this power of thinking your thoughts in words, and of actually hearing, in imagination, the words you think, is a most valuable power. To think accurately in words instead of in smudgy pictures makes for *clear* thinking, and clarity of thought leads to balanced judgment. But it is also the most valuable of all aids to writing—indeed, it is half the secret of success.

Every word, every sentence, before it is set down in writing, should be composed and 'said aloud in one's head.' Most people let the ink trail out of their fountain pen, while their thoughts keep pace with the words as they appear on the paper. Style was never achieved that way. You may correct and alter, but it is an inky and a messy business if much tinkering has to be done, and it is more than likely that you will leave unchanged many things that ought to be changed. In your head, however, you may weigh and balance, test and tinker, until you are satisfied. There is no smudging, no scratching-out. Instead, you may change a weak word for a stronger; you may eliminate an ugly jingle or repetition; you may alter your stress to produce any effect you wish, until your sentence—and after a little practice your whole paragraph—is well balanced and shapely, pleasant and convincing to read. Nor is it a long and laborious process. After a few experiments thinking ahead becomes a second nature, to the enormous improvement of style and increase of power.

Clear thinking, then, is the first requisite for good writing, and the secret of clear thinking is accurate observation.

Observe closely, and, before you write, think in words instead of in vague or careless pictures. Only then should you put pen to paper.

One should practise constantly—whenever one happens to remember—whenever there are a few minutes to waste; for it must be borne in mind that a clear and effective style cannot happen of its own accord. One learns to think by thinking—to write by writing, and nobody can be *taught* to be creative. I have known men who had their Shakespeare almost by heart, and yet could rarely produce a clear and intelligible notice for the notice-board. To learn to write well means a great effort, but one that is well worth while.

I would like to suggest three little exercises which may be used as patterns at the preliminary stage.

Walk down the road for a hundred yards and back again, observing comprehensively, without staring in people's faces. When you are back in your room, *think* what you have seen, in words; visual memory is so strong that there will be no difficulty in recalling everything. Then say your thoughts aloud; and if you can secure a long-suffering listener, so much the better. If you succeed in interesting him, you are on the right lines.

Next, choose some object in the garden—no matter what; —arrange a word-picture of it in your mind, and say it aloud. It is not so easy as one might think to describe a bee or a dandelion.

And thirdly, observe some *action*—a bird eating a worm, a worm objecting to being eaten, a dog running after a stick, a postman delivering letters—think it in words, and when you are satisfied write down on paper what you have thought.

We are not bothering yet about effects or polish. Clarity is five-sixths of style. "Be clear," a great critic once said, "and the rest will follow."

One of the immediate results of the habit of accurate

observation is a keener appreciation of style in the books one reads. One begins to observe an author's methods, and tries to produce similar results and effects oneself. The first step is to observe a great writer's wonderful powers of observation. Take John Masefield's poem, *Dauber*, for instance. The intrinsic merit of this poem, perhaps the greatest sea-picture in the language, is partly owing to the fact that it is a triumph of accurate observation. The descriptions of the fog, the storm, the polar snow—" most multitudinous drift of dirty white "—the pattering of reef-points on the sails, and a thousand more, are infinitely telling because of their truth. Most true, too, are such lines as these from *Reynard the Fox* :—

" Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass,"

or :—

" The redcoats ducked as the great hooves skittered
The Blood Brook's shallows to sheets that glittered."

or this from *Right Royal* :—

" Like glistening beetles clustered close
The myriad motors parked in rows."

Lastly, we will choose a prose example of accurate observation ; it is from Stevenson's *The Wrecker*. With Stevenson we look through the binocular, and what was vague and smudgy becomes sharp and distinct. The passage is a symbol of what we have been saying :—

" Nares went below, fetched up his binocular, and fell into a silent perusal of the sea-line ; I also, with my unaided eyesight. Little by little, in that white waste of water, I began to make out a quarter where the whiteness appeared more condensed : the sky above was whitish likewise, and misty like a squall ; and little by little there thrilled upon my ears a note deeper and more terrible than the yelling of the gale—the long thundering roll of breakers. Nares

wiped his night-glass on his sleeve and passed it to me, motioning, as he did so, with his hand. An endless wilderness of raging billows came and went and danced in the circle of the glass; now and then a pale corner of sky, or the strong line of the horizon rugged with the heads of waves; and then of a sudden—come and gone ere I could fix it, with a swallow's swiftness—one glimpse of what we had come so far and paid so dear to see: the masts and rigging of a brig pencilled on heaven, with an ensign streaming at the main, and the ragged ribbons of a topsail thrashing from the yard."

EXAMPLES

I

In this passage, taken from the Journal of Anson's "Voyage Round the World," note the extremely accurate observations made by Anson himself ("written up" as they are by his Chaplain), and his contempt for the Chinese for their lack of observation and interest.

In the evening we were surprised with a view of what we at first sight conceived to have been breakers, but on a stricter examination we discerned them to be only a great number of fires on the Island of Formosa. These we imagined were intended by the inhabitants of that island as signals to invite us to touch there, but that suited not our views, we being impatient to reach the port of Macao as soon as possible. From Formosa we steered W.N.W. and sometimes still more northerly, proposing to fall in with the coast of China to the eastward of Pedro Blanco, as the rock so called is usually esteemed an excellent direction for ships bound to Macao. We continued this course till the following night, and then frequently brought to, to try if we were in soundings: but it was the 5th of November, at nine in the morning, before we struck ground, and then we had forty-two fathom, and

a bottom of grey sand mixed with shells. When we had run about twenty miles farther W.N.W. we had thirty-five fathom and the same bottom; then our soundings gradually decreased from thirty-five to twenty-five fathom; but soon after, to our great surprise, they jumped back again to thirty fathom. This was an alteration we could not very well account for, since all the charts laid down regular soundings everywhere to the northward of Pedro Blanco. We for this reason kept a careful look out, and altered our course to N.N.W., and having run thirty-five miles in that direction, our soundings again gradually diminished to twenty-two fathom, and we at last, about midnight, got sight of the mainland of China, bearing N. by W. four leagues distant. We then brought the ship to, with her head to the sea, proposing to wait for the morning; and before sunrise we were surprised to find ourselves in the midst of an incredible number of fishing boats, which seemed to cover the surface of the sea as far as the eye could reach. I may well style their number incredible, since I cannot believe, upon the lowest estimate, that there were so few as six thousand, most of them manned with five hands, and none of those we saw with less than three. Nor was this swarm of fishing vessels peculiar to that spot: for, as we ran on to the westward, we found them as abundant on every part of the coast. We at first doubted not but we should procure a pilot from them to carry us to Macao; but though many of them came close to the ship, and we endeavoured to tempt them by showing them a number of dollars, a most alluring bait for Chinese of all ranks and professions, yet we could not entice them on board us, nor procure any directions from them; though, I presume, the only difficulty was their not comprehending what we wanted them to do, as we could have no communication with them but by signs. Indeed we often pronounced the word Macao; but this we had reason to suppose they understood in a different sense, since in return

they sometimes held up fish to us; and we afterwards learnt that the Chinese name for fish is of a somewhat similar sound. But what surprised us most was the inattention and want of curiosity which we observed in this herd of fishermen. A ship like ours had doubtless never been in these seas before; and perhaps there might not be one amongst all the Chinese, employed in that fishery, who had ever seen any European vessel; so that we might reasonably have expected to have been considered by them as a very uncommon and extraordinary object. But though many of their boats came close to the ship, yet they did not appear to be at all interested about us, nor did they deviate in the least from their course to regard us. Which insensibility, especially of maritime persons, in a matter relating to their own profession, is scarcely to be credited, did not the general behaviour of the Chinese in other instances furnish us with continual proofs of a similar turn of mind. It may perhaps be doubted whether this cast of temper be the effect of nature or education; but, in either case, it is an incontestable symptom of a mean and contemptible disposition, and is alone a sufficient confutation of the extravagant praises which many prejudiced writers have bestowed on the ingenuity and capacity of this nation.

II

Defoe was one of the most observant writers who has ever lived. He had an almost Shakespearean insight into other people's business and way of life; and was thus able to put himself into the place of his fictitious characters so accurately and vividly that one can hardly believe he is not speaking of his own personal experiences. Here is a typical passage from "Robinson Crusoe":—

My raft was now strong enough to bear any reasonable weight. My next care was what to load it with, and how to

preserve what I laid upon it from the surf of the sea; but I was not long considering this. I first laid all the planks or boards upon it that I could get, and having considered well what I most wanted, I first got three of the seamen's chests, which I had broken open, and emptied, and lowered them down upon my raft. The first of these I filled with provisions, viz., bread, rice, three Dutch cheeses, five pieces of dried goat's flesh, which we lived much upon, and a little remainder of European corn, which had been laid by for some fowls which we brought to sea with us, but the fowls were killed. There had been some barley and wheat together, but, to my great disappointment, I found afterwards that the rats had eaten or spoiled it all. As for liquors, I found several cases of bottles belonging to our skipper, in which were some cordial waters, and, in all, about five or six gallons of rack. These I stowed by themselves, there being no need to put them into the chest, nor no room for them. While I was doing this, I found the tide began to flow, though very calm, and I had the mortification to see my coat, shirt and waistcoat, which I had left on shore upon the sand, swim away; as for my breeches, which were only linen, and open-kneed, I swam on board in them, and my stockings. However, this put me upon rummaging for clothes, of which I found enough, but took no more than I wanted for present use; for I had other things which my eye was more upon, as first tools to work with on shore; and it was after long searching that I found out the carpenter's chest, which was indeed a very useful prize to me, and much more valuable than a ship-loading of gold would have been at that time. I got it down to my raft, even whole as it was, without losing time to look into it, for I knew in general what it contained.

My next care was for some ammunition and arms; there were two very good fowling-pieces in the great cabin, and two pistols; these I secured first, with some powder horns,

and a small bag of shot, and two old rusty swords. I knew there were three barrels of gunpowder on the ship, but knew not where our gunner had stored them; but with much search I found them, two of them dry and good, the third had taken water; those two I got to my raft with the arms. And now I thought myself pretty well freighted, and began to think how I should get to shore with them, having neither sail, oar or rudder; and the least capful of wind would have overset all my navigation.

I had three encouragements. 1. A smooth calm sea. 2. The tide rising and setting in to the shore. 3. What little wind there was blew me towards the land. And thus, having found two or three broken oars belonging to the boat, and besides the tools which were in the chest, I found two saws, an axe, and a hammer, and with this cargo I put to sea. For a mile or thereabouts my raft went very well, only that I found it drive a little distance from the place where I had landed before, by which I perceived that there was some indraft of the water, and consequently I hoped to find some creek or river there, which I might make use of as a port to get to land with my cargo.

As I imagined, so it was; there appeared before me a little opening of the land, and I found a strong current of the tide set into it, so I guided my raft as well as I could to keep in the middle of the stream. But here I had like to have suffered a second shipwreck, which if I had, I think verily would have broke my heart; for knowing nothing of the coast, my raft ran aground at one end of it upon a shoal, and not being aground at the other end, it wanted but a little that all my cargo had slipped off towards that end that was afloat, and so fallen into the water. I did my utmost by setting my back against the chests to keep them in their places, but could not thrust off the raft with all my strength, neither durst I stir from the posture I was in, but holding up the chests with all my might, stood in that manner near

half-an-hour, in which time the rising of the water brought me a little more upon a level; and a little after, the water still rising, my raft floated again, and I thrust her off into the channel, and then driving up higher, I at length found myself in the mouth of a little river, with land on both sides, and a strong current or tide running up. I looked on both sides for a proper place to get to shore, for I was not willing to be driven too high up the river, hoping in time to see some ship at sea, and therefore resolved to place myself as near the coast as I could.

CHAPTER II

On Words

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In the first chapter I maintained that the basis of good writing is clear thinking, and the key to clear thought is accurate observation. The next thing to consider is the medium of expression; and Words are the subject of this chapter.

Now no one ever achieved a style by learning rules and forcing ideas into stereotyped form. That way pomposity lies. One *must* speak and write grammatically, but language came first and the rules were deduced afterwards. When the boy was asked to correct the statement "It was me that broke the window," and replied "It *wasn't* me that broke the window!"—it was more important that he should express a natural indignation than that he should conform to a grammatical rule.

Instead of learning rules by heart one must learn first to manipulate words easily and without hesitation, and above all one must use taste and discretion in choosing the right word. The English language is so full and rich that there are generally a dozen words which will just do—but there is only one word which will 'get home'—only one truly *right* word.

There is no excuse for letting the wrong word or the weak word just do—for our language is the richest in the world. There is the Anglo-Saxon basis—short words for the most part, and blunt and strong. It is in true English that the ordinary talk of everyday life is carried on. If you observe your own talk you will find that most of the words

you use are simple and short. Then there are an enormous number of words derived originally from Latin—longer words, as a rule—and these give our language much of its richness and flexibility. All this is but the basis. The English language has a wonderful power of absorbing and naturalizing words from other tongues. Trade, travel, war, and religion have brought in words from every language under the sun, while modern science relies for the expression of its terms on an adaptation of ancient Greek, in such words as telephone, telegraph, and cinema.

To give a few examples. You speak of the Vikings crossing the billows to make a raid—and in that sentence you use three words introduced by the Norsemen. An admiral sits on the sofa working at algebra—and those three words are Arabic, or were so once. A violin and piano sonata ends with a crescendo—one is using Italian words. A boy strafes a dachshund for smashing his father's meerschaum—that is German. The skipper of a yacht sits abaft the beam—that is Dutch. You may arm a battalion or a regiment with bayonets—and the words were French.

Or, to go further afield, if you say that a Bolshevik had to pay a million roubles for a ride in a droski, you are using Russian words. Every time you ask for a shampoo you are talking Hindustani. If you put ipecacuanha in your chocolate you use the language of ancient Mexico. The South Sea Islanders may put a taboo on tattooing—in words that have now become English, and we may speak of killing a kangaroo with a boomerang—and in so doing use the language of the Australian aborigines. Think, too, of the story of the adoption of each one of these foreign words, and countless more, into our language. The word 'kangaroo' for example: it is said that Captain Cook's sailors going ashore in Australia saw these strange marsupials for the first time, and called the natives and asked what they were. One can imagine the rough English sailors questioning the natives,

"Hi, Joey, what d'yer call this beast?" "Kangaroo," replies the native; which means "I don't understand." "Oh, Kangaroo, is it?" say the sailors. And so the word is born. There is history in words, and poetry, and manners of old time, if we delve into their derivation, and our very names are beautiful monuments of a forgotten world.

One might go on for hours quoting English words which once were foreign but have been naturalized. A year or two will complete the absorption. The word 'potato' must have sounded as strange to the Elizabethan ear as 'bundabust' to our own. 'Pukka,' 'table d'hôte' and 'rendezvous' have nearly arrived. 'Macaroni' has come to stay.

All this to show how full and comprehensive our language is; that, as I said, there is no excuse for letting the weak word stand. The question is, how to select the *right* word. Well, it is a matter of taste and experience, and observation of the methods of great writers. And first it will be well to note that the long word is not necessarily the strong word. It *may* be so, but only when the sense or stress demands it. It is no good talking over people's heads—like the preacher who said to his congregation of yokels, "Of course I know you will quote Irenaeus against me." Nor is it worth while to explain a simple idea by an abstruse or grandiloquent phrase, as will be apparent if the word NET is looked out in Johnson's Dictionary.

Many of the most glorious—almost magical lines in the plays of Shakespeare consist of simple words of one or two syllables:—

> "Finish, good lady; the bright day is done
> And we are for the dark."

Or again:—

> ". . . that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a Man!'"

But to produce a sense of awe and immensity Shakespeare will use long words. There are two consecutive lines in *Macbeth* in which Shakespeare uses first long and then short words with consummate skill and power—when it is said that Duncan's blood—

> " shall rather
> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green one red."

When one is learning how to write, it is a good plan to use short, strong words to give the exact sense—even to substitute short English words for long words derived from Latin which one may already have set down. And they *will* give the exact sense, if the *right* short words are chosen. Above all, do not introduce a weak noun by a string of smudgy descriptive adjectives, or try to help out an ineffective verb by propping it up with adverbs. A great painter with a simple colour and one turn of the brush will produce a perfect effect which your amateur can never hope to attain by squeezing out his paints and messing them together on the palette.

Stevenson was a great craftsman in words. He disliked the adjective, and he loved the little noun. Consequently the effects he would produce by means of little homely words of *three letters* are always strong and memorable. Who can forget the first appearance of Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, for instance, made memorable by one homely, vivid word of three letters? Silver's face, Stevenson says, was " as big as a *ham*, plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling." I have remembered the " ham " simile since I was ten years old. Or again, there is the terrible fight in the wood, in the first of Stevenson's *Island Nights Entertainments* stories. The whole description flashes with terse phrases and vivid nouns and verbs—and the words are nearly all monosyllables! Here is one example: " His blood ran over the back of my hand, I remember, *hot as tea*." There is a con-

centration of horror and exactness in those three little words which could hardly be surpassed. Again, those who have read Stevenson's grim and powerful story *Markheim* can hardly fail to remember how, when the stooping dealer was stabbed in the back, he "struggled *like a hen.*" It is the unexpected homeliness of these little words which is so very telling. Thackeray again uses little words in masterly manner. "The poor young gentleman got very red"—he says, when a lesser writer would have explained that he "was overwhelmed with embarrassment and confusion." And perhaps the greatest book written in the simple English style is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—and it is partly owing to this simplicity that its vast popularity is due. The story is full from beginning to end of memorable monosyllabic phrases—as when Apollyon cries, "*Here will I spill thy soul!*"

Practise using little words, then, and simplify your style. Be sure they are the *right* little words, and be satisfied with nothing less. This applies especially to nouns and verbs and adjectives; but not to them alone. For instance, *For* and *Too* are often stronger and more effective than longer corresponding phrases. Set yourself to find the right noun to describe the light on the sea, the right adjective for a maiden aunt, and the right verb for the motions of a caterpillar—and so on and so forth. Your time will not be wasted.

Next, one must notice this fact. It is not enough to choose the right word. One must put it in exactly the right place with relation to the other words in the sentence. "Pop goes the weasel" is a nonsense phrase which has lived for two generations, and shows no sign of expiring—for the order of the words gives the phrase a peculiar lilt which is unforgettable. Yet if the phrase had been "The weasel goes pop," how many days would it have survived?

In Stevenson's description of the fight in the wood to which we have just referred there is this sentence : " I came down by a run, and lay half a minute, silly." The little word *silly* is apparently weak and undistinguished enough—but see how vivid an impression it conveys by virtue of its isolated place at the end of the sentence !

" Great is Diana of the Ephesians ! " has a powerful and telling sound which the straightforward statement " Diana of the Ephesians is great " is altogether incapable of conveying. Nor can one fail to notice the *flatness* of the line " Life's little day ebbs out swift to its close." Its inversion in the hymn is what has made it memorable.

The *sound* of words must not be forgotten in making a choice. And having chosen them, one must see that the sentence is in keeping with the sense. Again we will quote from Stevenson's story of the fight in the wood :—

" His body kicked under me like a spring sofa ; he gave a dreadful kind of long moan and lay still." One cannot but note the sharp, ' explosive ' sounds—the k's and p's in the first half ; and the dragging d's, m's, n's and l's in the second. The effect is perfect, but not in the least obtrusive.

Lastly, in choosing the right word one must not forget the significance of the sound of proper names. Homer realized the beauty of names when he wrote the Catalogue of the Ships. Walt Whitman knew their power when he piled up great symphonies of high-sounding American-Indian place names. There is something very telling about the lists of tribes in the Old Testament : " The Hivites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Canaanites "—and all the rest. In modern poetry proper names are used for the musical atmosphere :—

" Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, had stolen my heart away."

Or for freshness and vigour :—

" Effingham, Grenville, Raleigh, Drake,
Here's to the bold and free!
Benbow, Collingwood, Byron, Blake,
Hail to the Kings of the Sea!"

Sometimes names are chosen to imply character: Dickens always invented characteristic names. They are too familiar to need quotation. Gilbert invented names for comic effect:—

" Calamity Pop von Peppermint Drop,
The King of Canoodle Dum."

It is strange that great men should so often have had great-sounding names—and these may be used with telling effect. " Alexander of Macedon," for instance, or " Napoleon Bonaparte "—and in a different way " Sir Cloudesley Shovel," or " William Wallace."

The names of English towns, hills and rivers have been used for poetical effect at least since Michael Drayton wrote his *Polyolbion*, but never more freshly and with greater vigour than in Macaulay's fragment *The Armada*.

EXAMPLES

I

" The Armada," by Macaulay, illustrates the deliberate use of proper names:—

Attend, all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
I tell of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days,
When that great fleet invincible against her bore in vain
The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.

It was about the lovely close of a warm summer day,
There came a gallant merchant-ship full sail to Plymouth Bay;
Her crew hath seen Castil's black fleet, beyond Aurigny's isle,

At earliest twilight, on the waves, lie heaving many a mile.
At sunrise she escaped their van, by God's especial grace;
And the tall Pinta, till the moon, had held her close in chase.
Forthwith a guard at every gun was placed along the wall;
The beacon blazed upon the roof of Edgecumbe's lofty hall;
Many a light fishing-bark put out to pry along the coast,
And with loose rein and bloody spur rode inland many a post.
With his white hair unbonneted, the stout old sheriff comes;
Behind him march the halberdiers; before him sound the drums;
His yeomen round the market cross make clear an ample space;
For there behoves him to set up the standard of Her Grace.
And haughtily the trumpets peal, and gaily sound the bells,
As slow upon the labouring wind the royal blazon swells.
Look how the Lion of the sea lifts up his ancient crown,
And underneath his deadly paw treads the gay lilies down.
So stalked he when he turned to fight on that famed Picard field,
Bohemia's plume, and Genoa's bow, and Cæsar's eagle shield.
So glared he when at Agincourt in wrath he turned to bay,
And crushed and torn beneath his claws the princely hunters lay.
Ho! strike the flagstaff deep, sir Knight: ho! scatter flowers, fair maids:
Ho! gunners, fire a loud salute: ho! gallants, draw your blades:
Thou sun, shine on her joyously; ye breezes, waft her wide;
Our glorious SEMPER EADEM, the banner of our pride.
The freshening breeze of eve unfurled that banner's massy fold;
The parting gleam of sunshine kissed that haughty scroll of gold;

Night sank upon the dusky beach, and on the purple sea,
Such night in England ne'er had been, nor e'er again shall be.
From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay,
That time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day;
For swift to east and swift to west the ghastly war-flame spread,
High on Saint Michael's Mount it shone: it shone on Beachy Head.
Far on the deep the Spaniard saw, along each southern shire,
Cape beyond cape, in endless range, those twinkling points of fire.
The fisher left his skiff to rock on Tamar's glittering waves:
The rugged miners poured to war from Mendip's sunless caves:
O'er Longleat's towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks, the fiery herald flew:
He roused the shepherds of Stonehenge, the rangers of Beaulieu.
Right sharp and quick the bells all night rang out from Bristol town,
And ere the day three hundred horse had met on Clifton down;
The sentinel on Whitehall gate looked forth into the night,
And saw o'erhanging Richmond Hill the streak of blood-red light.
Then bugle's note and cannon's roar the deathlike silence broke,
And with one start, and with one cry, the Royal city woke.
At once on all her stately gates arose the answering fires;
At once the wild alarum clashed from all her reeling spires;
From all the batteries of the Tower pealed loud the voice of fear;
And all the thousand masts of Thames sent back a louder cheer:

And from the furthest wards was heard the rush of hurrying feet,
And the broad streams of pikes and flags rushed down each roaring street;
And broader still became the blaze, and louder still the din,
As fast from all the village round the horse came spurring in:
And eastward straight from wild Blackheath the warlike errand went,
And roused in many an ancient hall the gallant squires of Kent.
Southward from Surrey's pleasant hills flew those bright couriers forth;
High on bleak Hampstead's swarthy moor they started for the north;
And on, and on, without a pause, untired they bounded still:
All night from tower to tower they sprang; they sprang from hill to hill:
Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Darwin's rocky dales,
Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales,
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern's lonely height,
Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light,
Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Ely's stately fane,
And tower and hamlet rose in arms o'er all the boundless plain;
Till Belvoir's lordly terraces the sign to Lincoln sent,
And Lincoln sped the message on o'er the wild vale of Trent;
Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's embattled pile,
And the red glare of Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle.

II

A few pages from Chapter II of Archbishop Trench's famous book "On the Study of Words":—

What poetry is there, as indeed there ought to be, in the names of flowers! I do not speak of those, the exquisite grace and beauty of whose names is forced on us so that we cannot miss it, such as "meadow-sweet," "eye-bright," "sun-dew," "forget-me-not," "Venus' looking-glass," "queen-of-the-meadows," "Reine Marguérite," and the like; but take "daisy"; surely this charming little English flower, which has stirred the peculiar affection of English poets from Chaucer to Wordsworth, and received the tribute of their song, becomes more charming when we know, as Chaucer long ago has told us, that "daisy" is day's eye, the eye of day; these are his words—

> "That well by reason it men callen may
> The *daisie*, or else the eye of day."

For only consider how much it implied here. To the sun in the heavens this name, eye of day, was naturally first given; and those who transferred the title to our little field-flower meant, no doubt, to liken its inner yellow disc or shield to the great golden orb of the sun, and the white florets which encircle this disk to the rays which the sun spreads on all sides round him. What imagination was here, to suggest a comparison such as this, binding together as this does the smallest and the greatest! What a travelling of the poet's eye, with the power which is the privilege of that eye, from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth, and uniting both!

And then again what poetry is there often in the names of birds and beasts and fishes, and indeed of all the animated world around us; how skilfully are these names adapted to

bring out the most striking and characteristic features of the object to which they are given! Thus when the Romans became acquainted with the stately giraffe, long concealed from them in the inner wilds of Africa (which we learn from Pliny they first did in the shows exhibited by Julius Cæsar), it was happily imagined to designate a creature combining, though with infinitely more grace, yet something of the height and even the proportions of the *camel* with the spotted skin of the *pard*, by a name which should incorporate both these in its most prominent features, calling it the "camelopard." Nor can we, I think, hesitate to accept that account as the true one, which describes the word as no artificial creation of the scientific naturalist, but as bursting extempore from the lips of the populace at the first moment when the novel creature was presented to their gaze. "Cerfvolant," a name which the French have so happily given to the horned scarabeus, the same which we somewhat less poetically call the "stag-beetle," is another example of what may be effected with the old materials, by merely bringing them into new and happy combinations.

You know the appearance of the lizard, and the *star*-like shapes of the spots which are sown over its back. Well, in Latin it is called "stellio," from *stella*, a star; just as in like manner the basilisk was so called in Greek (the name means "little king") because of the shape, as of a *kingly* crown, which the spots on its head may be made by the fancy to assume. Need I remind you of our own "goldfinch," evidently so called from that bright patch of yellow on its wing; our "king-fisher," having its name from the royal beauty, the kingly splendour of the plumage with which it is adorned? The lady-bird or lady-cow is prettily named, as indeed the whole legend about it is full of grace and fancy; but a common name which in many of our country parts it bears, the "golden knop," or "knob," is prettier still.

This word reminds me of the vast amount of curious

legendary lore which is everywhere bound up in words, and which they, if duly solicited, will yield back to us again. For example, the Greek word "halcyon," which we have adopted without change, has reference, and wraps up in itself an allusion, to one of the most beautiful and significant legends of heathen antiquity; according to which the sea preserved a perfect calmness for all the period, the fourteen "halcyon days," during which this bird was brooding over her nest. The poetry of the name survives, whether the name suggests the legend, or the legend the name. Take again the names of some of our precious stones, as of the topaz, so called, as some said, because men were only able to conjecture (*τοπάζειν*) the position of the cloud-concealed island from which it was brought.

Very curious is the determination which some words, indeed many, seem to manifest, that their poetry shall not die; or, if it dies in one form, that it shall revive in another. Thus if there is danger that, transferred from one language to another, they shall no longer speak to the imagination of men as they did of old, they will make to themselves a new life, they will acquire a new soul in the room of that which has ceased to quicken and inform them any more. Let me make clear what I mean by one or two examples. The Germans, knowing nothing of carbuncles, had naturally no word of their own for them, and when they first found it necessary to name them, as naturally borrowed the Latin "carbunculus," which originally had meant "a little live coal," to designate these precious stones of a fiery red colour. But "carbunculus," though a real word, full of poetry and life, for a Latin, would have been only an arbitrary sign for as many as were ignorant of that language. What then did they, or what, rather, did the working genius of the language do? It adopted, but in adopting modified slightly yet effectually, the word, changing it into "Karfunkel," thus retaining the outlines of the original, yet at the same time,

inasmuch as "funkeln" signifies "to sparkle," reproducing now in an entirely novel manner the image of the bright sparkling of the stone, for every owner of the German tongue.

III

Another passage :—

"Heaven" is only the perfect of "to heave," and is so called because it is "heaved" or "heaven" up, being properly the sky as it is raised aloft; while the "earth" is that which is "eared" or ploughed; the "smith" has his name from the sturdy blows that he "smites" upon the anvil; "wrong" is the perfect participle of "to wring," that which one has "wrung" or wrested from the right; just as in French "tort," from "torqueo," is that which is twisted; "guilt" of "to guile" or "beguile"; to find "guilt" in a man is to find that he has been "beguiled," that is, by the devil, "instigante diabolo," as it is inserted in all indictments for murder, the forms of which come down to us from a time when men were not ashamed of tracing evil to his inspiration. The "brunt" of the battle is the "heat" of the battle, where it "burns" the most fiercely. "Haft," as of a knife, is properly only the participle of "to have," that whereby you "have" or hold it. Or take two or three nouns adjective; "strong" is the participle past of "to string"; a "strong" man means no more than one whose sinews are firmly "strung." The "left" hand, as distinguished from the right, is the hand which we "leave"; inasmuch as for twenty times we use the right hand, we do not once employ it; and it obtains its name from being "left" unused so often.

This exercise of putting words in their true relation and connexion with one another might be carried much further. We might take whole groups of words, which seem to us at first sight to acknowledge hardly any kinship, if any, with

one another, and yet with no great difficulty show that they had a common parentage and descent. For instance, here are "shire" and "shore"; "share," "shears"; "shred," "sherd"; they are all derived from one Anglo-Saxon word, which signifies to separate or divide, and still exists with us in the shape of "to sheer," which made once the three perfects, "shore," "share," "shered." "Shire" is a district in England, as it is separated from the rest; a "share" is a portion of anything thus divided off; "shears" are instruments effecting the process of separation; the "shore" is the place where the continuity of the land is interrupted or separated by the sea; a "shred" is that which is "shered" or shorn from the main piece; a "sherd," as a "pot-sherd" (also "pot-share," Spenser), that which is broken off and thus divided from the vessel; and these which I have adduced by no means exhaust this group or family of words, though it would take more time than I can spare to put some other words in relation with it.

CHAPTER III

Description

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Description

Sir James Barrie tells in a famous story how as a boy he lost the essay prize because he could not find, till time was up, the exact word to describe a church crowd. Twenty words, any one of which would just do, came into his mind, but he would not use them. When it was too late the right word came to him.

Remembering how essential it is to choose the right word, and put it in the right place, the next thing is to choose the right phrase, and with phrase and sentence to build up paragraphs for the purpose of *description*.

One must, of course, observe the rules of syntax; but we have no time to discuss the rules, and a knowledge of them must be assumed. As a matter of fact all educated persons observe the rules unconsciously in the ordinary course of conversation. It is only necessary in writing to be more precise and careful. No one but a master can use the long, rolling periods of Milton or Gibbon, or the short, apparently disjointed sentences of Macaulay. An attempt at the former will probably result in a breathless, heavy page—a kind of literary indigestion; and the latter in a jerky, telegraphic style, like that of Mr. Jingle. *Vary* your sentences in length, stress, and tone, according to the sense. Balance them in your head before you put them on paper. Whatever is worth writing at all is worth writing well.

The art of description is most valuable and important—but it is not easy to achieve. As I said before, accurate *observation* is the key; and you must write down what you

have observed with a certain freshness and originality, or nobody will bother to read what you have written. It is not worth while to tell people what everybody knows already —unless you can tell it in an arresting way. It is superfluous to state that the sun was setting in the west—for it so rarely does otherwise. It is quite a different matter when Coleridge says in *The Ancient Mariner*, "The sun now rose upon the right"; he has a reason for saying that, as you will see if you read on. Vague phrases—"this view is like a picture," or "you might be anywhere"—are worthless in description. Such phrases merely irritate. Yet if you tell the obvious in an unexpected way, the effect may be pleasing—as when the little girl was asked, "What is it that elephants have, and other animals don't have?"—and she replied, "Little elephants."

Generally speaking, descriptions are of two kinds: accurate explanation, and imaginative or suggestive word-painting—and their treatment is very different. In a text-book on shell-casting you would not write: "The molten metal streams forth like lava rushing down the slopes of Vesuvius" —for such description would be entirely out of place. Nor in a passage describing Mount Vesuvius would you speak of sines and cosines and angles of elevation. Describe first an umbrella and then a tooth-ache—and the difference will at once be apparent.

The distinction is simply this. In the former explanatory type of description your aim must be clearness and accuracy —your own personality must be kept out of sight. We know nothing about Euclid from the fact that he proved that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, except that he had a logical mind. In describing a penny, or an anchor, clearness and accuracy are the two things needful. Suppose one has to describe a plough, for example. First state what a plough is for: "A plough is an implement for cutting furrows in the soil, and turning it over."

We then proceed to build it up : " It usually consists of an iron framework, to the front of which chains are fastened to enable it to be drawn by a horse. The other end of the frame is divided to form handles for the purpose of guiding. To the front of the frame a knife is clamped, called the coulter, which cuts the first slit in the soil. Behind this is fastened the share, a steel blade twisted like that of a propeller, and pointed in front with a tooth. It is this twist in the share that turns the soil completely over." One may elaborate this description by explaining the use of wheels and other appurtenances—but the test of the description is simply this : Is the explanation clear, and does it work ?

Imaginative description, or word-painting, is a different matter altogether : for here, in order to convey an impression of truth, one must portray scene or character through the medium of one's own personality. Put twenty artists to paint exactly the same scene, and every picture will be different, and each suggestive in its own way : for each artist must, willy-nilly, fix himself upon the canvas.

When drawing a portrait in words, one should slur over points of feature and dress which are common to most persons, and emphasize little individual characteristics of clothes, features, or manner in which one's subject seems to differ from the rest. I referred to Stevenson's description of Long John Silver. Here it is in full :—

" As I was waiting, a man came out of a side room, and, at a glance, I was sure he must be Long John. His left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder he carried a crutch, which he managed with wonderful dexterity, hopping about upon it like a bird. He was very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham, plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling. Indeed, he seemed in the most cheerful spirits, whistling as he moved about among the tables, with a merry word or a slap on the shoulder for the more favoured of his guests."

Now the merit of this portrait lies in the fact that Stevenson has chosen for emphasis just those characteristics which seemed to him to make his man unique among pirates and distinct among the guests. As a portrait of Long John Silver it is complete; and it is also intensely Stevensonian.

It is the same with your landscape, seascape, or interior: choose the little individual characteristics and make them live, and your picture will be true. See how Thomas Hardy describes such a simple object as a window-board at the back of an old chimney-corner:—

"The window-board was curiously stamped with black circles, burnt thereon by the heated bottoms of drinking-cups, which had rested there after previously standing on the hot ashes of the hearth for the purpose of warming their contents, the result giving to the ledge the look of an envelope which had passed through innumerable post-offices."

It is Hardy's clean vision that makes the tiny picture live in the mind.

How unforgettable is the description of Peggotty's house in *David Copperfield*. Even the little ornaments and pictures remain in the mind years after the book has been read. One can quote it from memory:—

"On the walls were some common coloured pictures, framed and glazed, of scripture subjects: Abraham in red going to sacrifice Isaac in blue, and Daniel in yellow cast into a den of green lions, were the most prominent of these. Over the little mantelshelf was a picture of the *Sarah Jane* lugger, built at Sunderland, with a real wooden stern stuck on to it; a work of art combining composition with carpentry which I considered to be one of the most enviable possessions that the world could afford."

Mr. Joseph Conrad could paint a wide seascape in a single line—such as this: "I see a bay, a wide bay, smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the darkness." And see how tersely a storm is described by George

Meredith: "A storm, bearing battle overhead, tore the night to pieces."

Now notice this: in such passages as these—and in infinite numbers of others—the effect does not depend *alone* on accurate observation of the facts and the choice and nice arrangement of exactly descriptive words. There is something more—a strange air, or tone, which great writers can achieve, and which is called "Atmosphere." It is not always easy to see *how* the author produces an atmosphere, but one can feel it at once. There is a ghostly atmosphere about some stories, an old-world atmosphere about others—and so forth; and this tone pervades not only the story as a whole, but individual sentences, and even words. The explanation is probably this: that words and phrases call up vaguely in the mind memories and associated ideas—and the vague suggestion forms as it were a background of ghostliness or peacefulness or terror—or whatever it may be.

There is no denying that every distinctive word carries with it an atmosphere of some sort. If you have read Kipling's story called *They*—a story of very distinctive atmosphere—you will recall a passage where the blind lady sees the Human Aura. Kipling calls it the "Egg itself." Out in the East people believe that every man carries with him an aura or glow, that he walks as if he were inside a misty egg which changes in colour according to his mood and character. You may believe that or not as you like—but there is no doubt that words carry an aura with them. Say the word "Death" to yourself—or "London," or "Brontosauros," or "East," or "West"—and you will at once *feel* the vague atmosphere which it is so hard to define. Scores of impressions and associations crowd vaguely at the back of one's mind, just dimly recognized; and so the atmosphere is made.

Atmosphere does not depend entirely on the writer—the

reader has something to do with it too. To one man the word Socialist has a noble sound, suggesting high ideals and self-sacrifice; it makes another man grind his teeth. To one man the word 'Catholic' suggests all that is sublime in religion; to another, bigotry and superstition. Call a man a "Tory," and see what happens.

Or, again, the word 'man' would seem to be non-committal and neutral enough; but use it as Shakespeare used it in *Julius Cæsar* in the lines—

> "that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

and the word puts on immeasurable greatness. There are many other words for man, too; and each carries with it a distinctive atmosphere. There is 'fellow,' jolly good or otherwise; there is 'individual' or 'person' or 'gentleman' or 'chap'—there are plenty to choose from—but one must not *mix* one's atmosphere. You would not say, "May I have the honour of introducing this chap?" for the word is obviously out of keeping. Reading and experience alone can guide your taste in less obvious situations.

See how one may alter the atmosphere in time or place by substituting other words with the same meaning. Take a neutral sort of sentence such as this: "The good doctor rode off to visit a patient who was paralysed." We can make the atmosphere mediæval thus: "The worthy leach attended a burgess who lay sick of the palsy." Or the atmosphere may be that of the country: "The little practitioner jogged off on his nag to visit old Mrs. Hodge, who had had a stroke"; or of the West End: "The eminent specialist arrived in his limousine to attend Her Grace, who is suffering from a paralytic seizure." You can introduce a suburban atmosphere, a Hottentot atmosphere—or any you wish.

Lastly, vivid description and atmosphere may be pro-

duced by piling up characteristic detail. Listen to the following passage about Burke and India—from Macaulay. Then, for your own practice, choose another place or country, and describe it by this cumulative method.

"He had, in the highest degree, that noble faculty whereby man is able to live in the past and in the future, in the distant and in the unreal. India and its inhabitants were not to him, as to most Englishmen, mere names and abstractions, but a real country and a real people. The burning sun, the strange vegetation of the palm and the cocoa-tree, the rice-field, the tank, the huge trees, older than the Mogul Empire, under which the village crowds assemble, the thatched roof of the peasant's hut, the rich tracery of the mosque where the imaum prays with his face to Mecca, the drums, and banners, and gaudy idols, the devotee swinging in the air, the graceful maiden, with the pitcher on her head, descending the steps to the river-side, the black faces, the long beards, the yellow streaks of sect, the turbans and the flowing robes, the spears and the silver maces, the elephants with their canopies of state, the gorgeous palanquin of the prince, and the close litter of the noble lady, all those things were to him as the objects amidst which his own life had been passed, as the objects which lay on the road between Beaconsfield and St. James's Street. All India was present to the eye of his mind, from the halls where suitors laid gold and perfumes at the feet of sovereigns to the wild moor where the gipsy camp was pitched, from the bazaar, humming like a bee-hive with the crowd of buyers and sellers, to the jungle where the lonely courier shakes his bunch of iron rings to scare away the hyænas. He has just as lively an idea of the insurrection at Benares as of Lord George Gordon's riots, and of the execution of Nuncomar as of the execution of Dr. Dodd. Oppression in Bengal was to him the same thing as oppression in the streets of London."

EXAMPLES

I

A word-portrait from George Eliot's "Adam Bede":—

The afternoon sun was warm on the five workmen there, busy upon doors and window-frames and wainscoting. A scent of pinewood from a tent-like pile of planks outside the open door mingled itself with the scent of the elder-bushes which were spreading their summer snow close to the open window opposite; the slanting sunbeams shone through the transparent shavings that flew before the steady plane, and lit up the fine grain of the oak panelling which stood propped against the wall. On a heap of those soft shavings a rough grey shepherd-dog had made himself a pleasant bed, and was lying with his nose between his fore-paws, occasionally wrinkling his brows to cast a glance at the tallest of the five workmen, who was carving a shield in the centre of a wooden mantelpiece. It was to this workman that the strong baritone belonged which was heard above the sound of the plane and hammer singing:—

> "Awake, my soul, and with the sun
> Thy daily stage of duty run;
> Shake off dull sloth——"

Here some measurement was to be taken which required more concentrated attention, and the sonorous voice subsided into a low whistle; but it presently broke out again with renewed vigour:

> "Let all thy converse be sincere,
> Thy conscience as the noonday clear."

Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man nearly six feet high; with a back so flat and a head so well

poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work, he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad finger-tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent, and mobile eyebrows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured honest intelligence.

. . . . . .

Look at Adam through the rest of the day, as he stands on the scaffolding with the two-feet ruler in his hand, whistling low while he considers how a difficulty about a floor-joist or a window-frame is to be overcome; or as he pushes one of the younger workmen aside, and takes his place in upheaving a weight of timber, saying, "Let alone, lad! thee'st got too much gristle i' thy bones yet"; or as he fixes his keen black eyes on the motions of a workman on the other side of the room, and warns him that his distances are not right. Look at this broad-shouldered man with the bare muscular arms, and the thick firm black hair tossed about like trodden meadow-grass whenever he takes off his paper cap, and with the strong baritone voice bursting every now and then into loud and solemn psalm-tunes, as if seeking an outlet for superfluous strength, yet presently checking himself, apparently crossed by some thought which jars with the singing. Perhaps, if you had not been already in the secret, you might not have guessed what sad memories, what warm affections, what tender fluttering hopes, had their home in this athletic body with the broken

finger-nails—in this rough man, who knew no better lyrics than he could find in the Old and New Version and an occasional hymn; who knew the smallest amount possible of profane history; and for whom the motion and shape of the earth, the course of the sun, and the changes of the seasons, lay in the region of mystery just made visible by fragmentary knowledge. It had cost Adam a great deal of trouble, and work in over-hours, to know what he knew over and above the secrets of his handicraft, and that acquaintance with mechanics and figures, and the nature of the material he worked with, which was made easy to him by inborn inherited faculty—to get the mastery of his pen, and write a plain hand, to spell without any other mistakes than must in fairness be attributed to the unreasonable character of orthography rather than to any deficiency in the speller, and, moreover, to learn his musical notes and part-singing. Besides all this, he had read his Bible, including the apocryphal books, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying; The Pilgrim's Progress*, with Bunyan's *Life* and *Holy War;* a great deal of Bailey's *Dictionary*, *Valentine and Orson*, and part of a *History of Babylon* which Bartle Massey had lent him. He might have had many more books from Bartle Massey, but he had no time for reading "the commin print" as Lisbeth called it, so busy as he was with figures in all his leisure moments which he did not fill up with extra carpentry.

II

A word-picture from Dickens's "Bleak House."

It was one of those delightfully irregular houses where you go up and down steps out of one room into another, and where you come upon more rooms when you think you have seen all there are, and where there is a bountiful provision of little halls and passages, and where you find still

older cottage-rooms in unexpected places, with lattice windows and green growth pressing through them. Mine, which we entered first, was of this kind, with an up-and-down roof, that had more corners in it than I ever counted afterwards, and a chimney (there was a wood-fire on the hearth) paved all around with pure white tiles, in every one of which a bright miniature of the fire was blazing. Out of this room, you went down two steps, into a charming little sitting-room, looking down upon a flower-garden, which room was henceforth to belong to Ada and me. Out of this you went up three steps, into Ada's bedroom, which had a fine broad window, commanding a beautiful view (we saw a great expanse of darkness lying underneath the stars), to which there was a hollow window-seat, in which, with a spring-lock, three dear Adas might have been lost at once. Out of this room, you passed into a little gallery, with which the other best rooms (only two) communicated, and so, by a little staircase of shallow steps, with a number of corner stairs in it, considering its length, down into the hall. But if, instead of going out of Ada's door, you came back into my room, and went out of the door by which you entered it, and turned up a few crooked steps that branched off in an unexpected manner from the stairs, you lost yourself in passages, with mangles in them, and three-cornered tables, and a Native-Hindoo chair, which was also a sofa, a box and a bedstead, and looked in every form, something between a bamboo skeleton and a great bird-cage, and had been brought from India nobody knew by whom or when. From these, you came on Richard's room, which was part library, part sitting-room, part bedroom, and seemed indeed a comfortable compound of many rooms. Out of that, you went straight, with a little interval of passage, to the plain room where Mr. Jarndyce slept, all the year round, with his window open, his bedstead without any furniture standing in the middle of the room for more

air, and his cold-bath gaping for him in a smaller room adjoining. Out of that, you came into another passage, where there were back stairs, and where you could hear the horses being rubbed down, outside the stable, and being told to Hold up, and Get over, as they slipped about very much on the uneven stones. Or you might, if you came out of another door (every room had at least two doors), go straight down to the hall again by half-a-dozen steps and a low archway, wondering how you got back there, or had ever got out of it.

The furniture, old-fashioned rather than old, like the house, was as pleasantly irregular. Ada's sleeping-room was all flowers—in chintz and paper, in velvet, in needlework, in the brocade of two stiff courtly chairs, which stood, each attended by a little page of a stool for greater state, on either side of the fireplace. Our sitting-room was green; and had, framed and glazed, upon the walls, numbers of surprising and surprised birds, staring out of pictures at a real trout in a case, as brown and shining as if it had been served with gravy; at the death of Captain Cook; and at the whole process of preparing tea in China, as depicted by Chinese artists. In my room there were oval engravings of the months—ladies haymaking, in short waists, and large hats tied under the chin, for June—smooth-legged noblemen, pointing, with cocked-hats, to village steeples, for October. Half-length portraits, in crayons, abounded all through the house; but were so dispersed, that I found the brother of a youthful officer of mine in the china-closet, and the grey old age of my pretty young bride, with a flower in her bodice, in the breakfast-room. As substitutes, I had four angels, of Queen Anne's reign, taking a complacent gentleman to heaven, in festoons, with some difficulty; and a composition in needlework, representing fruit, a kettle, and an alphabet. All the moveables, from the wardrobes to the chairs and tables, hangings, glasses, even to the pin-

cushions and scent-bottles on the dressing-tables, displayed the same quaint variety. They agreed in nothing but their perfect neatness, their display of the whitest linen, and their storing-up, wheresoever the existence of a drawer, small or large, rendered it possible, of quantities of rose-leaves and sweet lavender. Such, with its illuminated windows, softened here and there by shadows of curtains, shining out upon the starlight night; with its light, and warmth, and comfort; with its hospitable jingle, at a distance, of preparations for dinner; with the face of its generous master brightening everything we saw; and just wind enough without to sound a low accompaniment to everything we heard; were our first impressions of Bleak House.

III

Atmosphere :—A London back-garden.

Mr. Nickleby closed an account-book which lay on the desk, and throwing himself back in his chair, gazed with an air of abstraction through the dirty window. Some London houses have a melancholy little plot of ground behind them, usually fenced in by four high whitewashed walls, and frowned upon by stacks of chimneys: in which there withers on, from year to year, a crippled tree, that makes a show of putting forth a few leaves late in autumn when other trees shed theirs, and, drooping in the effort, lingers on, all crackled and smoke-dried, till the following season, when it repeats the same process, and perhaps if the weather be particularly genial, even tempts some rheumatic sparrow to chirrup in its branches. People sometimes call these dark yards "gardens"; it is not supposed that they were ever planted, but rather that they are pieces of unreclaimed land, with the withered vegetation of the original brick-field. No man thinks of walking in this desolate place,

or of turning it to any account. A few hampers, half-a-dozen broken bottles, and such-like rubbish, may be thrown there, when the tenant first moves in, but nothing more; and there they remain until he goes away again: the damp straw taking just as long to smoulder as it thinks proper: and mingling with the scanty box, and stunted everbrowns, and broken flower-pots, that are scattered mournfully about —a prey to "blacks" and dirt.

IV

As an example of what is meant by sheer atmosphere—even without much meaning—take the following dialogue from among the fairy tales and folk-stories collected by the brothers Grimm. If you would test the power of its atmosphere, read it to a child.

"Where are you going?"

"To Walpe."

"I to Walpe, you to Walpe; so, so, together we'll go. Have you a man? What is the name of your man?"

"Cham."

"My man Cham, your man Cham; I to Walpe, you to Walpe; so, so, together we'll go. Have you a child? What is the name of your child?"

"Grill."

"My child Grill, your child Grill; my man Cham, your man Cham; I to Walpe, you to Walpe; so, so, together we'll go. Have you got a cradle? How do you call your cradle?"

"Hippodadle."

"My cradle Hippodadle; your cradle Hippodadle; my child Grill, your child Grill; my man Cham, your man Cham; I to Walpe, you to Walpe; so, so, together we'll go. Have you got a drudge? How do you call your drudge?"

"Do-as-well-as-you-can."

" My drudge Do-as-well-as-you-can, your drudge Do-as-well-as-you-can; my cradle Hippodadle, your cradle Hippodadle; my child Grill, your child Grill; my man Cham, your man Cham; I to Walpe, you to Walpe; so, so, together we'll go."

CHAPTER IV
Style

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Style

Style, when once it is formed, is part of personality: it gives you away completely. The subject may not be your own choice, but your style is yourself—taste, education, character, all run out of your fountain-pen and fix themselves on the paper whether you like it or not. If you doubt this, ask someone to lend you an old addressed envelope, and see how much you can tell correctly about the unknown writer from his hand-writing alone. Anybody can tell a good deal: an expert's insight is almost uncanny; yet there is merely the address on an envelope! Express your own thoughts in your own words, and you open a window into your mind.

First of all, you must have something to say—something really worth saying, or writing about. If you have not, it is far better to keep silence. It is a difficult thing for a bore to *know* he is a bore, for nobody cares or dares to tell him. It is a dreadful thing to discover that you are a bore too late. There is a very great play by St. John Hankin called *The Charity that Began at Home*. General Bonsor in this play is the prince of bores. His Indian stories are interminable, and never have any point at all. In the end he finds out that he is a bore—and to my mind it is the most poignant and pathetic moment of the play.

Let us assume that you have got something to say—something to which it will be worth while for people to listen. Then you must say it, or write it, as well as you possibly can; and here are a few hints to help you.

First of all, don't be *vague!* How often have we heard

the common remark made by someone who has been taken to admire a view: "Isn't it nice! You *might be anywhere!*" Now I would ask you, what is the value of a remark like that —so vague that it is not even true? It is more like purring, or crowing, than human language! Vagueness generally means laziness, that is all. So many people find it too much bother to think of the right words to express just what they mean, and this is the sort of thing one hears—"I went to see old What's-his-name in the village this morning. He has got something the matter with him and looks like nothing on earth. He might be any old age; and so might Mrs. Thingummy—and they keep the house all sort of anyhow."

Or this again: "I went out sailing this afternoon. It was blowing like billio; there was no end of a tide and the sea was all over the shop. I was feeling all sort of anyhow, and the other fellows looked like nothing on earth. Just as we were rounding the thingummy the cutter astern of us came tearing down like anything. I yelled out to What's-his-name to let go the what-d'you-call-it, but instead of that he hung on like winking, and that was that!"

Of course one understands what is meant in a vague sort of way, and such indistinctness is less intolerable in conversation than in writing, for one has no time to be critical. But the whole effect is blurred and slipshod. Now take for comparison a few lines at random from such a book as *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: "Flakes of foam swept past her sides; the water struck her with flashing blows; the land glided away, slowly fading; a few birds screamed on motionless wings over the swaying mastheads." Such a picture is clear-cut and satisfying. Here is another sentence from the same novel: "He flung at Jimmy's head the biscuit he had been all the time clutching hard, but it only grazed, and striking with a loud crack the bulkhead beyond burst like a hand-grenade into flying pieces." Here is truth in little things—and that is what matters.

Vagueness is often the result of using slipshod phrases, or words that have lost their original meaning—words that have become anæmic from overwork. How flat and uninteresting are such phrases as these : " I think that house is *pretty ugly !* "—" This dress is frightfully sweet ! "—" She is pretty awful, though of course she is awfully pretty ! "

Be distinct, then ; and at the same time be brief and precise. Nothing is more tiresome than padding, spinning words for the sake of filling up space when there is really nothing more to be said.

Suppose one had been guilty of a paragraph such as the following :—

" The fog grew thicker. Slowly, with almost imperceptible gradations, the condensing moisture closed me in like a curtain of half-opaque gauze, blotting out the landscape, obliterating one by one the objects in the middle distance, and even swallowing up the trees which stood at no considerable distance from my point of observation, till in spite of the incontestable fact that the trees would still be found *in statu* when the fog cleared away, one was oppressed with a vague feeling of unreality extending even to the existence of the trees themselves."

Now what is one to do about a paragraph like that ? There is only one thing to do. Fill your pen quite full of ink, and draw it relentlessly through the whole paragraph, excepting only the first four words. All has been said in those four words ; and the rest is padding.

Then, by the same token, avoid moral platitudes, especially at the beginning and the end of your composition—whatever it may be. Pomposity of language does not make up for lack of thought ; and preaching should be reserved for the pulpit. Have you noticed how infinitely telling and memorable a really good sermon is—and how rare ? It is rare because it is so extremely difficult to go on preaching year after year, and to the same people, without falling into

platitude. "I was sitting on the grass the other day—the grass was so fresh and green that I could not help saying to myself, 'Oh! why cannot we be like the grass!'"—we have all heard that sort of thing now and again. And the cause of it, as usual, is mental laziness. It is easy to slip into platitude, and it is a lapse that must be guarded against.

Do not be pompous. There is one style for talking and another for writing, of course; but there is no point in employing grandiloquent phraseology just because you are using your pen instead of your tongue. Dr. Johnson loved long words and rolling, balanced periods—and his style is very fine in its own way. It is when he makes young ladies talk in this manner that the modern reader is tempted to smile. Oliver Goldsmith, greatly daring, once said to Dr. Johnson, "If you were to write about little fishes you would make them talk like great whales." Let us beware of great whales.

Beginners usually find that as soon as they set themselves to think about style they become self-conscious—and the result is what is called 'journalese.' This is a kind of affectation. In one's anxiety to produce a literary effect, one uses superlatives, worn-out conventional words and phrases, and half-digested classical tags. In severe cases of 'journalese' the sun becomes "old Sol"; a football is a "leather spheroid"; the crowd "a seething mass of humanity"—and of course they "evince intelligent curiosity." When the aeroplane crashes there is a "blinding flash," a "deafening report," followed by a "sickening thud"; and the ground is "Mother Earth." Moreover, "the crowd manifested considerable sympathy with the relatives of the deceased airman."

Now notice this: when such phrases as "sickening thud" and "deafening report" were used for the first time, they were probably strong and effective enough. Constant use has sapped their vitality, and when once a phrase becomes

conventional it loses its power. Very different is the effect of the "*ear-bursting*" report of the pistol in the cabin of the Flying Scud. (I quote from Stevenson's *The Wrecker*.)

If journalism is the literary snare of youth, mannerism is the fault of age. One must avoid slipping into little tricks of speech that become tiresome by constant repetition —like Cicero's "*esse videatur*." The trouble is, it is so easy to criticize the mannerisms of other people, so hard to notice one's own. Some of us have a trick of saying "and . . . er . . ." between every two sentences; others conclude every remark with "you see what I mean." Some people go on repeating "Quite—quite—quite . . ." all the time one is talking;—yet none of them is conscious of his own mannerism. It is harder still to detect one's own mannerisms in writing; but there are three very common tricks. Watch for them, and when they are found, out with them! The first is the snare of constant inversion. "Down came the hammer!" is strong and telling—but don't do it in almost every sentence!

The historic present must not be overdone. In writing an historical story you might say, "The king raises his hand for silence"—and the sudden leap into the present undoubtedly gives life to the scene. But if you do it *all the time* there is no surprise, no sudden vivifying—and the effect is merely monotonous.

Do not ask constant rhetorical questions; and if you must ask them, let them go unanswered. "What on earth were they to do next? *They couldn't think!*"

Avoid the repetition of adjectives in 'threes'—a very common fault. I have known men to go on writing for years without realizing that they suffered from this very common but distressing complaint.

The question of slang is more difficult to decide, for it is hard to say exactly where King's English ends and slang begins. In any case far more licence is allowable in speech

than in writing; indeed, in writing, slang is better avoided altogether, unless it happens to be very humorous, or such an apt metaphor that it is hardly slang.

Most slang is a matter of fashion. People soon "get fed up," as they say, with their pet phrases, and "see them off." Some slang, however, is so good that it establishes itself, as it were, as respectable and legitimate expression, and comes to stay. Such a phrase, for example, as "I feel it is *up to me* to help" is so simple and expressive that it seems to be naturalizing itself. It sometimes happens, too, that apparent slang turns out to be a revival of old English usage. "I shall *push along* with the work," for instance, occurs in the *Paston Letters*; and the modern American use of the word 'some' is to be found in Shakespeare. For the most part, however, slang terms are fads of the moment, and if you were to write, "The judge then got up the pole, and put the wind up the prisoner, who consequently got cold feet," in a very little while nobody would understand what you meant; indeed, the expressions are already moribund. It is best to avoid slang, then, good or bad; for though the best metaphorical slang is most expressive and arresting, and some of it—such as the expression "gone west"—is even beautiful, it is fleeting stuff, here to-day and gone to-morrow, like the memory of our own conversations.

But you may say: It is easy enough to say "Don't!" What can we *do* to attain a style? Let me tell you once more: observe accurately—think clearly—choose the right words, and build them up with care into sentences of infinite variety—choose the right atmosphere—be as fresh, brief and original as you possibly can—and, above all, do not be afraid of being *natural*. Your style is you yourself—an expression of your personality; and all these things we have been speaking of are the trappings and embellishments. So try to express *yourself always*, without fear or favour;

and if you find yourself using unnaturally pompous and grandiloquent phraseology because you *think somebody else would like it*, pull yourself up and scratch it all out. If you have written something chatty and facetious just because someone told you to be *bright*—some funny story, for instance, which you know, at the back of your mind, is not *really* funny—cut it out and cast it from you. Style is *personality*—not polish, nor trappings, nor erudition. So when you write just *be yourself*, and never mind what anybody says to the contrary.

EXAMPLES

I

The familiar style, from W. Hazlitt :—

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may say so, purity of expression than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and to avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine, familiar, or true English style is to write as anyone would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or, to give another illustration, to write naturally is the same thing in regard to common conversation as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it

is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume, indeed, the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation; neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts; but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick out the very one the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style is that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric"—words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases, with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue. How simple it is to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low, to be always pedantic

and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shown in adhering to those which are perfectly common, and yet falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement, I should say the phrase " To cut with a knife," or " To cut a piece of wood " is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common; but " To cut an acquaintance " is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly, therefore, use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a licence of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*. All the provincial or bye-phrases come under the same mark of reprobation—all such as the writer transfers to the page from his fireside or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use and convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value.

II

A strong, simple style : " Christian's Fight with Apollyon " (Bunyan).

But, in this Valley of Humiliation, poor Christian was hard put to it; for he had gone but a little way, before

he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him; his name is Apollyon. Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back or to stand his ground. But he considered again that he had no armour for his back; and therefore thought that to turn the back to him might give him the greater advantage with ease to pierce him with his darts. Therefore he resolved to venture and stand his ground; for, thought he, had I no more in mine eye than the saving of my life, it would be the best way to stand.

So he went on, and Apollyon met him. Now the monster was hideous to behold; he was clothed with scales, like a fish (and they are his pride), he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion. When he was come up to Christian, he beheld him with a disdainful countenance, and thus began to question with him.

Apol. Whence come you? and whither are you bound?

Chr. I am come from the City of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and am going to the City of Zion.

Apol. By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and the god of it. How is it, then, that thou hast run away from thy king? Were it not that I hope thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now, at one blow, to the ground.

Chr. I was born, indeed, in your dominions, but your service was hard, and your wages such as a man could not live on, "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23); therefore, when I came to years, I did as other considerate persons do, look out, if, perhaps, I could mend myself.

Apol. There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects, neither will I as yet lose thee; but since thou complainest of thy services and wages, be content to go back: what our country will afford, I do here promise to give thee.

Chr. But I have let myself to another, even to the King of princes; and how can I, with fairness, go back with thee?

Apol. Then Apollyon broke out into a grievous rage, saying, I am an enemy to this Prince; I hate his person, his laws, and people; I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.

Chr. Apollyon, beware what you do; for I am in the king's highway, the way of holiness; therefore take heed to yourself.

Apol. Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said, I am void of fear in this matter: prepare thyself to die; for I sware by my infernal den that thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul.

And with that he threw a flaming dart at his breast; but Christian had a shield in his hand, with which he caught it, and so prevented the danger of that.

Then did Christian draw, for he saw it was time to bestir him: and Apollyon as fast made at him, throwing darts as thick as hail; by the which, notwithstanding all that Christian could do to avoid it, Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot. This made Christian stand a little back; Apollyon, therefore, followed his work amain, and Christian again took courage, and resisted as manfully as he could. This sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent; for you must know that Christian, by reason of his wounds, must needs grow weaker and weaker.

Then Apollyon, spying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that, Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now. And with that he had almost pressed him to death, so that Christian began to despair of life: but as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, whereby

to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly stretched out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise" (Micah vii. 8); and with that gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian, perceiving that, made at him again, saying, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. vii. 37). And with that Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings, and sped him away, that Christian, for a season, saw him no more (James iv. 7).

In this combat no man can imagine, unless he had seen and heard as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight—he spake like a dragon; and, on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile, and look upward; but it was the dreadfullest sight that ever I saw.

III

Dr. Johnson "makes little fishes talk like great whales." A young lady is speaking:—

I was surprised after the civilities of my first reception to find, instead of the leisure and tranquillity which a rural life always promises, and, if well conducted, might always afford, a confused wildness of care, and a tumultuous hurry of diligence, by which every face was clouded, and every motion agitated.

Another lady informs us that she—

had not passed the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship, and the joys of triumph; but had danced the round

of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of applause, had been attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly and the vain, and had seen her regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love.

CHAPTER V
On Writing Short Stories

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Most people whose bent is writing have an ambition to write short stories—and a very laudable ambition too—for a good short story gives an immense amount of pleasure, at least to the writer. Most educated persons must have tried their hand at writing short stories at one time or another. It can hardly be otherwise when one considers the torrential flood of English short stories which is pouring out monthly, weekly, daily—even hourly—in the magazines and newspapers of England and America. Millions of short stories are written and published; but what of the millions upon millions that are written and rejected? The thought is baffling,—imagination boggles at it.

One may assume that the rejected stories are for the most part rubbish. Yet of all the thousands of stories that reach the stage of publication every month, how few are really worth the writing—how extraordinarily few can be called great!

Now this is not quite so strange as at first sight it would appear—for a *great* short story is a very difficult artistic achievement. I would like to point out where some of the difficulties lie, and how they may be overcome—for story-writing, even if you do not publish, is excellent practice, and much more amusing than bridge.

First of all, you must think out a Plot; and your plot must be original and full of interest, otherwise all will depend on style and treatment: and that puts a severe tax on the amateur writer. It is not easy to think of new

plots, for all the obvious ones are worn out—such as the 'somebody-turning-out-to-be-somebody-else' plot, the 'Englishman-who-never-says-anything-but-always-comes-out-on-top' plot—and all their kind. A short story is a delicate work of art—a crisis of life told in little—so that if there is no *development* either of action or in mental conflict, if there is no element of surprise, nothing of the delightfully unexpected, your story will be "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." You *must* make a plot, and the slighter it is, the more delicately it must be treated—and you must work it out in the rough, on paper, before you attempt to write your story.

You must be BRIEF and concise. A long short story is a horrid, anomalous sort of thing—the dachshund of literature. Some of the greatest stories in the world are quite astonishingly short—two or three thousand words, perhaps: while the most memorable of the fairy tales and Old Testament stories are condensed to a few hundred. Let me quote a short story from the Apocrypha—as that is less familiar. It is the story of Daniel and the Dragon—and it is a real short story, not a mere anecdote:—

"And in that same place there was a great dragon which they of Babylon worshipped. And the King said unto Daniel: Wilt thou also say that this is of brass? lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh; thou canst not say that he is no living god, therefore worship him. Then said Daniel unto the King: I will worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God. But give me leave, O King, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff. The King said: I give thee leave.

"Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof: this he put in the Dragon's mouth, and so the Dragon burst in sunder: and Daniel said: Lo, these be the Gods ye worship."

And so the dragon burst in sunder!

Think of it—not a word about blinding flashes, or deafening roars—and yet, here is a dragon blown to pieces, and a religious system permanently exploded—and all in *seven words*. Surely a masterpiece of economy!

Of modern short stories—much longer stories than this, of course—one of the shortest is also one of the most supremely great. It is a French story, by Maupassant, and is called *Les deux amis*. We shall have more to say about this masterpiece in a minute. The plot is simply this: two little Parisian shopkeepers go a-fishing outside the gates of Paris during the siege: they are seized by the Prussians and shot as spies because they will not give away the password. That is the plot. The theme of enthralling interest is the sublime, almost instinctive and unconscious courage of the Frenchmen, and the entire lack of imagination on the part of the Prussian officer, who is quite unaware that he is witnessing an act of supreme heroism.

It is all so simple, so concise and brief—not one word too much—not a lurid adjective nor a note of horror. Yet, for pathos and restrained power, I know few stories like it in all literature.

Next, your narrative must be RAPID—not breathless and headlong, but rapid and sustained. In a novel one is at liberty to wander off into delightful digressions—to pose your characters, and talk about them confidentially with the reader, as Fielding did, and Thackeray did, with so intriguing a result. Not so in the short story. There is no time for digression, for the unfolding of character, the explaining of motives; character, motive, plot—all have to be presented rapidly and without explanation as the story goes along; in that marvellous story, "The Two Friends," there is not one word about heroism—not even of mental conflict. Simply this: "Monsieur Morison ne répondit pas." That is what is meant by a *rapid* narrative: not a slap-dash, head-over-ears jumble of adventures, but an

inevitable swift sequence. You should try hard for this, though it is far from easy. You will probably find yourself at first *speeding up* a dragging narrative artificially by use of words and phrases such as 'suddenly,' or 'all of a sudden.' As a matter of fact such words often have the opposite effect, as you will see if you cut them out and read your paragraph again.

One must not be irrelevant—not even for a sentence—or the balance will be spoilt. "'I am so tired,' said Mary, who was wearing a wide-brimmed hat trimmed with cherries."—There you see the lack of balance at once. Every phrase should bear in some way upon the plot, character, or atmosphere. Take for example one of the greatest of English short stories—Kipling's *The Man Who Was*. From the moment when the sound of a shot outside sends "every man feeling for his defenceless left side," to that most wonderful climax when the supposed carbine thief proves himself a British officer, exiled to Siberia since the Crimea, there is not an incident, not a spoken word, not an epithet, which does not contribute to the great crescendo of evidence and thrilling interest. And then the wonderful anti-climax—when the wail of the Dead March told the wondering sergeants who saw no gap at mess table that an officer of the Regiment had resigned his new-found commission.

You may marvel at that story for its sustained excitement and its deep pathos—you will marvel still more if you analyse its masterly structure.

I sometimes think *The Man Who Was* and *The Drums of the Fore and Aft* are the most *English* stories ever written. The strong sustained theme, developing to the crisis with a decision like Fate itself—the deep pathos, with an entire absence of sloppiness—how cunningly the canteen rum is made to do its work in the latter story!—lend those stories a virility hardly surpassed in literature. Aim at a strong and

simple theme when you begin to write. You will not attain to Kipling's mastery, but at least you should "hitch your wagon to a star."

Then there is the story with a double motive—a subtle interplay of *two* themes leading step by step to the inevitable climax. This requires a firm but delicate touch very difficult of attainment; but try it, and learn from failure. I am rather of opinion that such stories are better suited to the French mind—and the French language; and certainly the French are past-masters at this very delicate art. Take the *Siege of Berlin* by Daudet: Old Colonel Jouve, an officer of the First Empire, takes rooms by the Arc de Triomphe at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War—in order to be present at the march past of the victorious French troops at the end of the war. The shock of the first defeat almost kills him—but he survives; and to keep him alive, his little grand-daughter, assisted by the doctor, has to invent a victorious campaign culminating in the siege of Berlin, when it is Paris, of course, which is really being besieged.

Step by step the two motives advance side by side with infinite subtlety, till at last, by an astonishing effort of will, the old Colonel gets up, dresses himself in his old uniform, and steps out on to the balcony, amazed to find Paris so dull and deserted. Then there is a confused movement below —a flashing of helmets and clash of sabres; the little drums of Jena begin to beat, and out bursts the triumphal march of Schubert! With a great cry—"To arms! to arms! the Prussians!"—the old man falls on to the balcony. "And this time old Colonel Jouve was really dead." Read this story (*Le Siège de Berlin*) if you do not know it; and then try the difficult 'double motive' yourself.

Some stories depend for their effect upon surprise. The American writer O. Henry in his best stories contrives to turn your expectations upside down in the last sentence. This is very telling for a story or two; but one soon tires of

being thrown by what is a sort of literary jiu-jitsu. Don't do the same clever thing too often, or it becomes a *cliché*. Do it now and then—and it is infinitely effective. Who can ever forget the gasp of dismay on reading this sentence at the end of the Waterloo chapter of *Vanity Fair:* "And Amelia was at home praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart"? I have not forgotten the shock with which, as a boy, I read that sentence for the first time.

Of course the 'unexpected' is often used for comic effect. Stephen Leacock so uses it when he describes the Pirates coming aboard, "rolling their eyes, tearing their hair, and paring their nails"; and again—I think it is in *Gertrude the Governess*—"Nearer and nearer he came with every revolution of the horse." But this is a clever and amusing trick which will hardly bear copying.

Write in the mood of your story, and keep its atmosphere *consistent*. Choose the right words—that is half the secret. If your story is grim, be grim, but not lurid; if pathetic, be sympathetic yourself, but not sloppy; if humorous, be really funny, but for heaven's sake don't be facetious: even if the banana-skin-on-the-pavement kind of joke is funny in real life, it will not do on paper.

Read Kipling's story, *The End of the Passage*, and you will feel from the very first line the atmosphere of heat and intolerable oppression. That strange war-story, too, of Joseph Conrad's, of the British patrol boat and the neutral who was in the pay of the enemy—the atmosphere of fog and uncertainty holds one as a spell from beginning to end.

Finally, when you make your characters converse—as is almost inevitable in the short story—remember that in real life you use more words to say a thing than they do in books. In other words, conversation must be potted and condensed, or it will become intolerable. To test this, listen carefully to an ordinary conversation in a railway

carriage, and say to yourself, "If I were putting this talk into a story, how much should I have to leave out?" When you have skimmed off the froth you will be surprised how little remains.

And when you have written your story, go through it again and cut out all that is unnecessary: it may be heart-breaking work, but it is good for the soul, and the story.

I have chosen, as an example of the short story, a little story of my own—not that I imagine it possesses any intrinsic merit, but because, having written it myself, I am in a position to explain how it was constructed.

First of all, then, the story is based on fact; and it is difficult to make one's characters and incidents live unless they are based on experience. But real life is rarely balanced in artistic shape. In order to tell the strange eventful history of any life in readable form, one must select and rearrange, adding a bit here, and omitting there—and above all one must condense.

The framework of the story is in three parts: the Meeting, the Development, and the Parting. The first and last each contain one incident; the second several. The theme of the story is the influence of heredity;—the atmosphere is one of mystery which is never cleared up;—and the tone aimed at is one of pathos. Three parts, then, I said to myself; and in each part three strong 'motives' to be borne in mind. Incidents, characters, and talk must all be taken from life and experience, and the completed story must *balance*, in three parts—or "glimpses," as I have called them—a short scene, a much longer part, and again a short final scene. Lastly, it must be condensed. In its original form the story was much longer—a third as long again; but it was overloaded at the beginning, and too egoistic, and had to be rigorously cut down before it was fit for publication. Here, then, is the little yarn, for what it is worth:—

GINGER

THE STORY OF A WAIF

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I

This little story has a Hero, but no Plot; at least, the little Plot, such as it is, died with the Hero, and that is why it interests me. It has a Clue, and the Clue lies upon my cabin table as I write; but the Clue will never be followed up, and Heaven knows what sorrowful little tragedy it holds in secret.

It so happens that most of my professional life has been spent in South-east London.

I love South-east London with all its squalor and apparent monotony. I love the changing kaleidoscope of characters that tumble before me through the years. And it sometimes happens that part of the pattern repeats itself, and I get little glimpses—years apart—of characters whom I had not expected to meet again.

So here are three little glimpses, slight and transient enough in themselves, but sufficient, perhaps, to touch your sympathy, as they did mine.

Glimpse the first: A drear November evening some twelve years ago, hazy and very cold; great motor-omnibuses barking ominously and skidding in the thin, black mud; frowsy women grouped in the glare of the public-houses; and myself, jaded and low for lack of holiday, making my disconsolate way towards London Bridge.

I crossed the bridge and turned to look back at the river. There were few people in sight; only a few ghosts, hurrying in the haze, for the evening southward rush was over; and out of sheer aimless curiosity I climbed over the iron

railing and descended the stairway that leads down to the water at the back of Old Swan Pier.

It was dark down below. The huge arches loomed black and terrifying, like Egyptian pillars; and at my feet ran the river, black as sin, and chuckling hideously.

All was silent and dark, and I was quite alone.

What was that? Suddenly, close at my side, there came a little terrified moan. It put my nerves all on edge, and it was some seconds before I could bring myself to turn my head. When I did so I thought I saw a movement in the darkest shadow of the pier, and I stepped hurriedly towards it.

"Le' me alone, I ain't done nothin'!" came a child's voice, small and terrified, out of the shadow. I stopped, relieved beyond words at the human voice.

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked.

"I ain't done nothin'!" cried the little voice again. "You leave me alone!" And I thought I saw a hand raised as if to ward off a blow.

"But nobody's going to hurt you, Tommy!" I said, laughing purposely. "Why are you down here? What's the matter?"

There was a pause. "*I'm frightened*," he whispered at last.

"Of course you're frightened," I said—and his hand was ice-cold and shaking as I tried his pulse—"of course you're frightened down here by the river in the dark!"

"I ain't afraid of the river, and I ain't afraid of the dark!" he said with a touch of resentment.

"Then what is it?" Another pause, and then—

"It's me mother—she's sittin' on the stairs—with a candle, and she don't know me—and she's gone all funny—she's laughin'—*and her eyes*"—and again came the little terrified moan that had startled me before.

"Well, look here, my son," I said, "you mustn't stop

down here. Come along with me, and I'll try to put things right—I'm a doctor, you know. You're not afraid of me?"

"No," came the answer at once.

"Come along, then!" I said, and I helped him up. "What's your name, young man?" I asked, as we reached the top of the stairs.

"Ginger," said the boy.

"Ginger? Ginger what?"

"Just Ginger, because of me 'air," he said.

"Right, Ginger. And where do you live?"

He gave me the address—a dismal slum. I knew it well.

"I run all the way here," he added.

"Did you, though?" I said. "Well, the first thing to be done is to get some hot coffee inside you."

We made our way to the little coffee-stall that stands, or stood in pre-war nights, down in the corner of Fish Street, and I ordered a couple of steaming mugs.

I looked at the boy. He seemed to be about ten years old; he wore no collar; his coat was much too big for him, as were his boots; and wisps of stockings half covered his legs. But he did not appear to be ill-made, only painfully thin and incredibly dirty. His eyes were very large—indeed his face was so thin that he seemed to be all eyes; and as far as I could see for dirt his features did not at all suggest the typical slum child. His hair was tumbled and matted, and fell in shocks over his eyebrows, but it was not "ginger." It was rather of a deep copper colour, or would be when washed, but in the slums "ginger" is a generic term for reds of every shade.

"Well, come along!" I said presently, for I meant to keep him walking, "and tell me about your mother."

"She ain't my mother," said the boy.

This was rather a baffling start. "Your father, then?" I asked.

"He ain't my father," he said.

Baffler number two. "But you spoke of your mother just now?" I suggested.

"I lives with Mrs. Bowles and her 'usband, and I calls them mother and dad, but they ain't my mother and dad really. I never 'ad none, not to remember," he explained.

"Are they kind to you?" I asked.

"Mother's good to me, but dad beats me when he's drunk, and he's drunk most nights now."

I asked more questions as we threaded our way by slippery short cuts, but I did not get much out of him. Only once did he come out of his half-stupor, and that with one of those arresting remarks that I always associate with Ginger, which even now set me wondering about the mysteries of heredity and subconscious memory.

"Sir! Look!" he cried suddenly, tugging at my sleeve. We were passing one of the wharves on the Surrey side, where men were working furiously in the flaring gas-light, unloading square packing-cases and piling them into carts. The gas-light shone upon the great smoke-stack, the bridge, and the long, white boats of a large tramp-steamer.

"I love ships more'n all the world!" said Ginger suddenly to himself, and his eyes were gleaming in his dirty little face. And it was so unexpected that I literally started.

We reached the dingy slum at last. The door of number twenty-seven stood open, and the whole female population of the street appeared to be gathered round it, with the exception of two, who were even now hurrying up with a policeman.

"May I come past, please? I'm a doctor," I said as I reached the crowd. The women made way, shrilling comments.

"It's Mrs. Bowles 'as got 'em again!" screamed one.

"It's 'er 'usband wot drove 'er to it, pore soul," cried another.

"There's worse upstairs if you arst me," muttered a third.

"Will one of you look after the lad while I see to Mrs. Bowles?" I asked, for Ginger was clinging to my sleeve.

"Pore lamb!" said an enormous, bulging female who stood on the doorstep with her arms clasped in front of her. "Come to yer old 'Uggins while the gentleman looks after yer mother!" And she placed her greasy apron over Ginger's shoulders as if to guard him from the powers of darkness.

It was just as the boy had said. Mrs. Bowles sat on the stairs laughing, with a nearly burnt-out candle in her hand. She was not drunk, but quite horribly mad.

And there *was* "worse upstairs." I need not tell you the details of what we found, the police and I. Suffice to say that the body of Mr. Bowles lay on the floor, and his hand still gripped a razor.

I came down again presently, feeling, I confess, a little blue about the lips, though I am used to horrors.

"I'll take the lad to the Home," I said to one of the constables whom I happened to know. "They'll be sure to take him in. Come along, Ginger! You can't stop here, for your mother's very ill," I added.

"I've told him as 'ow 'is father's cut 'is froat," wheezed Mrs. 'Uggins, who still stood in the doorway with her apron round Ginger's shoulders. "And a good riddance, too, is wot I sez. But 'e wasn't 'is real father, yer know, sir!" she added with a beery and mysterious wink.

"There isn't anything you want to take along with you, is there, Ginger?" I asked, as we hurried away.

With a quick gesture the boy thrust his hand into his shirt. "No, sir, I've got it," he said.

That night Ginger slept in a dormitory with forty other little homeless creatures. But at least he went to bed washed and unwhipped, and slept between blankets.

And so for two years and more Ginger went out of my life and almost out of my thoughts, but not quite. For once I had occasion to visit the Home, and was told there that Ginger had been sent on to the Sailor-boys' Training School, as I had suggested, and was doing "exceedingly well."

And once I received a little limp Christmas-card, forwarded from the home—just a robin with snow all over its face—and underneath was scrawled "from your happy and affexionit ginger."

II

Glimpse the second—and here we have no more murky low-tones, but colour and happiness—sun, and sea, and shining morning faces.

I woke early to the sound of quavering bugles, and wondered dreamily where I was—I had only arrived at the Training Camp the night before.

I reached for the flap of my tent and looked out. The sun was already driving the morning mist from the parade-ground. Five sleepy little buglers, bare-footed and with nightshirts hastily tucked into khaki trousers, were straining with only squeaky success to render the "Charley Up." An instructor in full uniform was already striding down the long line of marquees crying: "Hi-yi-yi-yi! Turn out there! Turn out!" And in a moment or two youngsters came crawling in crowds from under the canvas and scampered to the washing-troughs.

Five minutes later a little orderly in sailor uniform hurried in with a can of hot water from the kitchens. He placed the can in my camp basin, turned and saluted, smiling all over his face. At once I knew who it was—there was no mistaking that copper hair. But what a change! He had grown and filled out, and was now a lithe, strong lad, straight as an arrow.

"Why, it's Ginger!" I exclaimed.

"Yessir!" said the boy. "I heard you were come last night, and I arst the Cap'n if I might be your orderly."

"That's capital!" I said. "Why, Ginger, what a big fellow you've grown! How do you like it, and how are you getting on?"

"Oh, I'm *fine*, sir!" said Ginger, and "fine" is the highest superlative these youngsters ever use.

"And when did they make you a petty officer?" I asked, pointing to his badge.

"Last week, sir," said Ginger, full of pride. "You see, sir, I'm band petty officer. I plays the clarinet, and looks after the kids in the band, and I get two and a minjy pay on Saturday—that's twopence ha'penny, sir!"

"I know!" I laughed. "This isn't my first camp, Ginger. So you really like school, do you?"

"School's fine!" he replied, "but I like camp best—the swimmin' and the sailin'—they're *fine!* You'll come in the *Talbot* with us, won't you, sir? I didn't like the 'ome in London, not a fat lot. There was a big boy there what stole the kids' food till I lashed out on 'im. I got a black eye, but he never stole no more. But I'll never go back to London, sir, never in all my life—not to stay. London makes you feel sort of—all sort of——" Ginger turned his big eyes towards the tent roof, at a loss for a word.

"Cramped?" I suggested.

"That's it, sir. As if you can't breathe sort of. There's little 'ouses and more little 'ouses, and you never get out. In the room where I used to sleep there was a li'l winder on to the roof, and I used to get out where I could see Saint—Saint Cleo Patrick's needle——" (Ginger looked at me to see if that was right, and I nodded to imply acquaintance with this obscure saint.) "And then I used to forget about the li'l 'ouses and think about the river and ships

and goin' to sea. Will you want anything else before breakfast, sir?" he finished abruptly.

"No, thank you, Ginger."

"Right, sir." And with another salute he ran off.

I was thinking about Ginger as I strolled to the officers' mess-tent. A most unusual boy, not a bit like the ordinary slum lad, either in appearance or talk. Even his intonation was different.

I asked the Captain about him at breakfast.

"He's a first-rate lad," he said, "and if you watch him at work or games you'll find he will always take the lead."

"He looks to me like a gentleman," I suggested.

"He does," the Captain agreed. "But we have never been able to find out anything about his people, nor who it was that paid the man Bowles money, which he spent in drink."

It must not be supposed that there was anything "strange" or "morbid" about Ginger. He was the most boyish of boys—the life of every game in which he took part; and in the bathing hour, when the sea in front of the camp was lashed by hundreds of shouting, gleaming youngsters, Ginger's copper head always shot out far beyond the rest, till the young swimmer had to be called back by the instructor in the boat.

But there *were* things about him that were unusual. And if I mention those rather than the others, it is only because I want to show you the strange workings of Fate in that boy's life. Perhaps as a medical man I ought to call it the psychology of heredity, but, after all, "Fate" comes to much the same thing, and it's an easier term.

After breakfast there was "Sick-bay" for me to attend to, while the boys did physical drill to the accompaniment of the band in which Ginger played the clarinet—three hundred little sailors dancing the hornpipe barefoot on the sandy grass. Then came the Captain's inspection of tents,

and scrubbing of tables, and polishing of guns and carbines, and at twelve o'clock the whole camp marched down to the sea for bathing.

That afternoon I found Ginger with "Puggy" Lever and Charley Stokes playing by the old breakwater.

"Come and play, sir, won't you?" cried Ginger as I approached.

"It's crebs—come and play crebs, sir!" shouted Puggy.

"What's crabs?" I asked.

"Crabs is a fine dag," said Charley, pointing to a large circle in the sand with a sort of bull's-eye marked in the middle. "You puts yer crab in the middle and tickles 'im up wiv' a stick, and the one wot gits to the outside first wins a cigarette picshur!"

"Come on, then!" I said, and the game waxed furious.

"My crab ain't any good," said Ginger presently, "'e's tired. I'll go and get another."

A minute later a crab descended out of the sky from the other side of the breakwater and landed with a whack on the sand, while Ginger came scrambling back. But the crab did not move.

"'E's dead!" cried Ginger in surprise, picking up the body of the unfortunate crustacean.

"Of course, he's dead, you old stupid," I said. "What else did you expect?"

"'E did come an *awful* wollop!" said Ginger pensively; and then presently, "I wonder why crabs don't get drownded?"

I was just thinking of a simple reply when Puggy undertook the explanation.

"Ga-r-r-n!" he said. "That's easy! They 'olds their bref!"

"Or, p'raps," suggested Charley, "it's them marks on their backs what keeps them from bein' drownded. My dad

'ad two snaikes tattooed on 'is arm to keep '*im* from bein' drownded."

"Ga-r-r-n!" said Puggy again. "My father 'ad a tex' on 'is back and two 'Erald-angels singin' on 'is chest, and '*e* was drownded!"

This was rather a stumper.

"Well, anyway," said Charley, "Ginger wears something round 'is neck what keeps 'im from bein' drownded, don't you, Ginger?"

Ginger put a hand to his "jumper" vest with a quick action that I had seen once before, and his face flushed.

"And has it kept you from drowning, Ginger?" I laughed.

"I dunno," he said. "Perraps it did—once."

"And when was that?"

"Under the bridge," said Ginger. For a second time in our acquaintance the boy startled me with a "wild surmise."

"Oh! Come on!" cried Puggy impatiently, and in a moment the game of crabs was in full swing again.

That evening, when all the camp was dark and quiet—it was only half-past nine, but we were early risers—I went out on to the parade ground for a final stroll and a last cigarette. And I was happy, for the sea air had blown my London worries all away. I reached the great mess-tent, and, groping my way through the dark to the piano, I sat down and played the haunting Voyage motive from *Tristan*. It fitted with my mood.

As I played I was aware of a light behind me.

"Officers' rounds," I thought to myself, and I did not look round till I had finished the air. Then I turned.

It was Ginger. He stood by the door curtain, a brown blanket pinned across his shoulders, and a candle-lamp in his hand.

"Play it again, sir! Do play that again!" he said.

"Why, Ginger, what are you doing here?" I asked.

"I'm on guard, sir—till ten o'clock. But do play that tune again! *I know it!*"

"You know it? But you can't possibly know it!" I laughed.

"Yes, I do, sir; I used to hear it . . . oh, I dunno!" And he looked at me with puzzled eyes. Suddenly he began humming softly to himself. I listened in utter amazement —for it was the Sailor's song from *Tristan!*

Then he stopped and laughed. "I can't stay," he said. "I'm on guard. But do play it again, sir! Good night, sir."

"Good night, Ginger!" I said. I played the air again, my mind full to the brim of wonder. As I walked back to my tent I could see the swinging of Ginger's lantern. In what strange, long-forgotten world were his thoughts wandering?

We were twenty miles out at sea. All the afternoon the *Talbot* training ketch had spanked along in capital style. There had been much to see and much to do, plenty of work and plenty of food—for those who had an appetite! (For out of the "crew" of forty only the cook-boy and Ginger and three others had ever been to sea before.) And now it was night.

I woke about one o'clock, and was at once aware that we were "lolloping"; there were creakings and crackings and jingling of glass, while every quarter of a minute the old boom fell with a crash and a shudder. I rolled out of my bunk, climbed into a sweater and sea-boots and things, and looked in at the fo'c'sle.

A little oil-lamp swung heavily backwards and forwards with the motion of the ship, and under it lay the twenty boys who composed the Port Watch—some huddled in bunks, and a few slung in hammocks.

I climbed the companion to the deck. The night was hot and very still. The ship lay broadside on to the swell, and she rolled heavily as she climbed the flank of each sleek wave that heaved under her, and then slid down the other side.

By the light of the binnacle-lamp I could see the old skipper smoking contentedly at the wheel, while two youngsters sat huddled by his side.

Hanging on by the stays, I had begun to make my way "forrard" when I stumbled upon a little dark form. I struck a match.

"Hullo, Charley!" I said. "Not feeling well?"

"Awfu' bad!" said poor Charley. "I shan't never be a sailor—I'll be a green-grocer."

"Buck up, old son!" I said. "You'll be better as soon as the wind gets up. Come into the bows and I'll 'spin up'!"

We made our way forrard, clinging on to ropes and the cabin tops, and stepping over the rest of the Starb'd Watch who lay hunched against everything that wouldn't slide.

Two boys kept watch up in the bows. They sat one on each side of the bow-sprit under the flopping foresail.

"Well, Ginger!" I said, as I struck another match. "Enjoying yourself?"

"It's *fine!*" cried Ginger with enthusiasm, and in the match-light I saw that he meant it.

"And what about you, Puggy?" I asked.

"I've been sick free times," said Puggy with intense indignation, "an' now I'm goin' ter be agine!" And he was.

"Spin up, sir—do spin up!" said Ginger.

"Right you are!" I said; and settling myself against the bowsprit I "span up"—which means that for two hours I told old pirate yarns, while the boys listened with enthusiasm.

Twice Ginger had to interrupt me with a shout of "Red

light on the port bow, sir ! "—and was answered by a grunt from the Skipper away aft.

And then slowly a lemon-coloured sheen appeared on the Eastern horizon; the sails lifted, and jolly gurgling noises began to happen under the bows, and we were sailing. Then in the east a long cloud, thin as a scimitar, began to glow like molten gold.

" Look, sir ! " cried Ginger, pointing at it. " One day," he went on dreamily, " I'll sail a boat all of me own. I'll sail all night like this—all alone—nobody but me and the sea ! "

He had his wish—sooner than he thought and in stranger manner.

III

Glimpse number three—and the curtain rings up on War. Personally, when war broke out I felt myself strong, and still under forty, and with a pretty fair sea experience to my credit, and so I applied for a commission in the R.N.V.R.—and got it. Since that time we have been knocking about anywhere between Cork and the Bristol Channel.

Twice I had heard from Ginger in as many years. Once when he left the school to join the Merchant Service (his ambition was always to have a command " of his own " some day, and so he would not join the Royal Navy). And more recently I had had a letter from him addressed from S.S. *Candia*, Palermo. He appeared to be enjoying life thoroughly, and delighting in all that he saw, but, characteristically enough, his descriptions were all sea-sights, and not of the ports at which he touched. He told me how they had twice been " chased by submarines. But the skipper he's a good 'un, and we dodged and dodged and got clean away. I was away aft shoutin' the direction because the skipper says as I 'ave got sharp eyes. It was fine, sir ! "

I smiled to myself as I read this, for I could picture Ginger's enthusiasm.

And then suddenly we met.

It was a raw, gusty morning in May—about seven o'clock. The tide was under us, and the wind dead in our faces as we thrashed along somewhere south of the Tuskar rock.

My junior had the glasses, and it was he who first spotted the boat.

"There's an open boat on the starb'd bow," he said suddenly. "Submarines again, I expect."

I took the glasses, blinked the salt from my eyelashes, and followed his pointing finger. Then suddenly I saw it—a white open boat with one little mast and a lug-sail, and a solitary figure at the tiller.

I altered course quickly and bore down on her. She was running before the wind, but I think the figure saw us, too, and made in our direction. We approached each other, and as her bows dipped I made out other forms lying sack-like across the thwarts. But it was my Sub. who first read her name.

"I think I can read the name," he said, stooping to rest the glasses on the canvas bridge-screen. "S . . . S . . . C . . . A . . . N . . . *Candia!*"

I started, seized the glasses from him, and peered at the boat that leapt and thrashed towards us, now hardly a quarter of a mile away.

Then I put my megaphone to my lips, and shouted "Ginger!" as loud as I could shout. My Sub. turned to me in amazement, but I had no eyes for him. I was staring at the little figure in the stern-sheets—his shock of copper hair, and his pinched, white face.

"Ginger!" I shouted again. "Carry on! We're coming!"

The boy threw up his head suddenly, stared in my direction, and then smiled. But he made no answer. I could

see now that his right arm rested on the tiller, and the lugsail-sheet, after passing round a cleet, was tied to his left.

As I reversed engines the boy put the helm over, ran up into the wind, and came alongside with perfect precision. Then he sat, staring with wide-open eyes at the flapping sail, but never moved. Two of my men had to jump aboard and lift him on to the deck.

There were three others in the boat, but they were stone dead, and over one of them Ginger had placed his coat.

I gave my junior to understand that he was in charge of the ship, told him his course, and then hurried to the cabin whither the lad had already been carried.

But it was clear from the first that there was little chance of saving his life.

For a long time he could not speak at all, but he watched me with friendly, curious eyes.

"Don't try to talk, Ginger," I said as I heated fresh blankets. "Just listen, and I'll tell you why I am here and in uniform. I can see you are asking me." So I told him as I worked, and slowly a little life began to return to the boy's frozen limbs.

"I'm glad you're here, sir," he said at last.

"But I wish I could have picked you up many hours earlier, old son," I said. "How long were you out, Ginger —in the open boat, I mean?"

"Two nights out," said the boy. I looked at him in pitiful amazement. There was nothing to be said. The tragedy seemed too big for comment. Presently he began to talk more freely. What he said was broken and disjointed, of course, for he was quite obviously dying; but I learnt from him that the *Candia* had been torpedoed absolutely without warning. She had been struck right in the bows, and settled so quickly that there was no time to do more than launch one boat. He himself and two others were

in the stern when she was struck, and it was they who got the boat clear, and they picked up the skipper ten minutes after the *Candia* sank.

All that night and the following day they had carried on north-westerly, hoping to be seen by a passing vessel, or, failing that, to make a port in the south of Ireland. But no vessel came within hail, and they made no land-fall. They had no food of any sort, and their bodies were almost frozen. Before midnight on the second night out the "other men" had all died. The skipper was the last to go.

"'E was a good man, and I tried to save him," said Ginger. "But 'e couldn't stick it. Then I was quite alone. It blew hard. And it was cold; I never knew it *could* be so cold!"

Told as bluntly as I tell it now the tragedy seems cruel enough. But I had seen the open boat, and here was Ginger dying before my eyes; so that I felt to the full the reality of that horror—the boat, the darkness, and the dangerous sea; the three dead men—and the lad, alive but half-frozen, sitting alone in the stern-sheets.

But not so the boy. Suddenly he looked up with something of his old enthusiasm and said: "But you know, sir, it was *fine*, that last night! There was nobody left but me, and the boat—I had to edge her into the seas all night—and the noise of the wind—it made me think of that tune I used to hear a long time ago—before I can properly remember. And when it began to get light I didn't feel the cold—not so much. I wasn't afraid of the dead men. I just meant to win through. I meant to. And then I was goin' to write and tell you about it, sir; but I'm glad as you're here, sir. It was fine!"

Even as he spoke I saw how mistaken I had been, and how blind. For what I had shuddered to regard as Tragedy unrelieved, Ginger, by sheer courage, had transformed to sublime Adventure. It *was* fine—a great deal finer than the boy himself could possibly know.

But we could not save him; he died that afternoon just as we put in to Wexford. He went out quite happily, nothing harrowing, and nothing sentimental about it. And the last thing he did was to give me the "thing he wore round his neck to keep him from being drownded," as Charley had said. It was his "real Mother," he told me.

I have it here. Just a silver locket, tightly fitting; and inside is a miniature portrait of a lady, very wistful and gracious, with hair of a deep coppery-gold.

Personally I have no wish to follow up the clue. What right have I to be curious? But whether Ginger knew more than I did—and I never had a chance of asking him—or whether, as I am inclined to believe, it was a vague stirring of long-dormant memories, and perhaps even instincts that had come down from forgotten generations, that made him talk and think so strangely—that indeed I should like to know.

But now I never shall.

CHAPTER VI

On Writing Essays and Articles

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In Chapter V the writing of stories was discussed—hard enough things to write well, in all conscience! We shall now consider the writing of essays—which is harder still. Some years ago, when the teaching of English in schools was looked upon as a sop to the faddists, and relegated to one hour a fortnight—which nobody took very seriously—the English exercise consisted in writing an essay on "Character and Environment," or "The pen is mightier than the sword," or some such subject about which one cared less than nothing. It was a silly practice. As well set a boy to compose a sonata when he is still in the "Merry Peasant" stage. For the Essay is an extremely difficult form of composition. It must be short and shapely—perfectly balanced, and nicely finished. If thoughtful, it must be terse—not lumpy; if witty, it must not be facetious; if paradoxical or epigrammatic, the touch must be very delicate and light.

Can you see a boy of fourteen doing all that? I cannot. A good essay is an achievement even for your man of letters, and most delightful reading are the essays of such writers as G. K. Chesterton, E. V. Lucas, Robert Lynd, and Dean Inge. But it is silly to expect such achievements from school-boys and school-girls.

Much may be done, however, with the Essay in a simple form—rather what we call by the horrid little name of an 'Article'; and there is no better practice than to collect all one's thoughts about a given subject, select from them, arrange them, and write them down in the very best style at

one's command. The *Times* Third Leader is a charming and very readable example of this unpretentious essay form. Each little article has a heading such as "Practical Jokes" or "Valentine's Day," or what not. The length of each is about half a column, and style and subject matter both invite one to read. Master essays such as those of Emerson or Charles Lamb may be altogether out of reach, but the little essay-article is by no means impossible of attainment; it is capital practice, so let us see how it can be done.

First of all we must choose a subject. That would seem at the outset to be a very difficult matter. How can one choose a really *good* subject—one that people will want to read about? And how is one to *know* if it is good? Very puzzling it seems. And yet—the solution is so ridiculously simple. There is no such thing as a bad subject, and it does not matter in the least what subject you choose! You may be an expert on your subject, as Francis Bacon was when he wrote his essay on "Gardens"; or you may know nothing whatever about your subject—or profess to know nothing, as Robert Lynd did when he wrote his Easter homily on Eggs. It doesn't matter one way or the other. We will choose a most unpromising subject and work it out together. Then you will see that this is true.

Now first of all your essay is formal and must be properly balanced. You have to get into your subject, discuss it fully, and get out of it again. It is no good choosing a subject and going at it full-tilt without arranging your ideas. If you do that your essay will consist of one paragraph followed by a series of postscripts, each beginning with an imaginary "Oh, by the way," or "Which reminds me," or "I forgot to mention," or "I ought to have said before," which results in a hotch-potch without unity or development, and indeed is not an essay at all. You *must* make a scheme for your essay before you begin to write it; and this is how I advise you to do it. Take a large sheet of paper, draw a line

down the middle of it, and write your subject up at the top. What shall our subject be? Something really tiresome and unpromising. "Boots and Shoes" occurs to me. "Boots and Shoes" be it: for good or ill let us see what can be done.

No time need be wasted. In your left-hand column put down every idea that occurs to you relevant to the subject. One idea will suggest another, and that the next; you may side-track and digress, but you need not waste time. If we were in a class we would make suggestions round and round; —as it is I must do it myself, so here goes:—

Boots and Shoes

The evolution of boots and shoes—why they were invented.
Boot manufacturing towns—Norwich—Northampton.
Boot and shoe factories. Special processes such as goloshe-punching. How do you punch goloshes?
Warehouse stacked with millions of boots.
Barefoot children outside.
The Cothurnus and Buskin—classical stage.
Milton,—"when Jonson's learned sock was on."
Puss in Boots.
Cinderella and the glass slipper. "Glass" a mistake.
The old woman who lived in a shoe.
Seven league boots.
The torture of the Boot.
Hotel "Boots"—Sam Weller.
Cobblers. Many great men who started as cobblers.
Sandals—Greek—æsthetic—simple-life. Arguments for and against.
Chinese ladies and compressed feet. Modern shoes the wrong shape—spoil one's feet.
Sailor boys dancing the horn-pipe bare-foot.

Different kinds of shoes. Wooden shoes—Dutch—French sabots—clogs—Henry VIII's slashed shoes—Louis XIV's high scarlet heels—special dancing shoes—armour shoes—Wellington boots—Hessians.

Marriage custom of throwing a shoe. Why?

Taking off shoes for respect.

Moses and the burning bush.

Ballad of John Nicholson.

Ladies' slipper, the flower. Fox-glove means fairy's glove.

German for glove is "hand-shoe"; for "thimble" is "finger-hat."

The game of Hunt the Slipper. "Cobbler, Cobbler, mend my shoe!"

Hans Andersen's story of the girl in red shoes who couldn't stop dancing.

Kipling in *Rewards and Fairies:* "No one now for cleanliness—Finds sixpence in her shoe."

People who collect shoes which belonged to great men and women.

Specialised shoes. Ski and skates—waders and snow-shoes.

Blacking bottles and Charles Dickens.

Horse-shoes and luck.

Here we may stop—not because we have exhausted our ideas—for each one of these jottings would suggest many more—but for the simple reason that we have here enough material for half a dozen essay-articles.

Our next business is to *select* and *arrange*. You must rough out your ideas into shape before you start; otherwise your essay will be without form and void, lacking unity and balance. But you must not use a set, stereotyped scheme. You do not want to begin with a wash of platitude, proceed to the pudding, and end with literary indigestion. Vary

your scheme every time you write, remembering only that you have to get into your subject, develop it, and get out again without disaster.

Now go back to your sheet of paper and bracket off a few lines at the top of the right-hand column for an Introduction; and choose for this space the most suitable of our jottings on Boots: "Cobblers," perhaps, or one of the stories. Next comes a big bracket for "development." Inside this bracket we can group our jotting, or as many of them as we need. First "Boots in Tradition," perhaps—and divide that again into "Boot and Shoe Customs," and "Boots and Shoes in Story." Our next big bracket might be the Practical Side—all sorts and conditions of Boots in one bracket; Boot factories and factory life in another; adaptations of Boots, such as Ski and Skates, in a third, and at the bottom of one column we must choose jottings that would make a good Conclusion—"Shoes for Luck," perhaps. Here then is our scheme. But remember it is only one of countless possible schemes. If any one else had made the scheme it would have been quite different.

Having prepared a scheme, follow it as you write. The method may look artificial, but I do not think it is. Indeed I doubt if any great writer has ever written an essay without sketching it out first—or at least planning it most carefully in his head. The *Essays of Elia* seem to flow easily from the pen; but that is the master's art: they are not *really* unpremeditated.

When you begin to write, plunge in—do not crawl in at the shallow end. If you want to know how an essay should begin, read the first sentences of any of Bacon's Essays—the Essay on Gardens, which I mentioned just now, for instance. From the very start he grips his subject and the reader's interest; and this is what one must always aim at.

We are now under way, and the next thing is to develop our theme. We must not use too many of our jottings, or

the essay will be overloaded. An essay is literature in little —like a delicate miniature. Every sentence must tell; every point must have its place without the appearance of being dragged in. You may take infinite trouble to balance a paradox in your mind, but it must appear to have run easily from your pen—not to have arrived in a pantechnicon.

Paragraphs are to the Essay what chapters are to the Novel. They break up the main subject into its topics. See to it that each little topic has a paragraph to itself, and construct your paragraph to emphasise that point. Have you ever taken a good paragraph to bits to see how it is made? If not, let me do it for you. First there is the key sentence, which tells you what the paragraph is going to be about—not necessarily the first sentence, but more often so than not. Then comes the development, in which you expand what your key sentence has anticipated. And lastly your final sentence, which does not necessarily *sum* it up, but finishes it off with a pleasant concluding *rhythm*. The sound of your final sentence gives the tone to the whole paragraph.

Turn up "The Siege of Arcot" in Macaulay's *Clive*, and you will see just what is meant. "Rajah Sahib proceeded to invest the fort of Arcot, which seemed quite incapable of sustaining a siege." There is your key; and you would expect the paragraph to describe this incapacity, and so it does. "The walls were ruinous; the ditches dry"—and so on and so forth. "During fifty days the siege went on," the next paragraph begins, and goes on to describe the "firmness, vigilance and ability" shown in the defence, and the loyalty of the Sepoys who offered to give up their rice to the Europeans. And the paragraph concludes with this rhythmic sentence: "History contains no more touching instance of military fidelity, and the influence of a commanding mind." Just as in your essay, then, your paragraph is made in three closely united parts—for you have got to get in, to develop it, and then get out again. And let me

emphasise again the importance of getting out in a good rhythm. Look at the next paragraph but two in Macaulay's *Clive*. It ends like this " . . . and the besiegers, drunk with enthusiasm, drunk with *bang*, rushed furiously to the attack." The paragraph finishes with a click of finality—like shutting the door.

For practice I recommend you to take this morning's *Times*, and criticise the Third Leader. Find the key sentences; notice the balance of paragraphs; analyse the title; and test whether the final sentences run trippingly on the tongue. Then try to write one yourself.

EXAMPLES

I

A Meditation upon a Broomstick, according to the Style and Manner of the Hon. Robert Boyle's Meditations—(*Swift*).

This single stick, which you now behold ingloriously lying in that neglected corner, I once knew in a flourishing state in a forest; it was full of sap, full of leaves, and full of boughs; but now in vain does the busy art of man pretend to vie with nature, by tying that withered bunch of twigs to its sapless trunk; it is now at best but the reverse of what it was, a tree turned upside down, the branches on the earth, and the root in the air; it is now handled by every dirty wench, condemned to do her drudgery, and, by a capricious kind of fate, destined to make her things clean, and to be nasty itself; at length, worn out to the stumps in the service of the maids, it is either thrown out of doors, or condemned to the last use of kindling a fire. When I beheld this, I sighed, and said within myself: Surely mortal man is a broomstick! Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair on his head, the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable, until the axe of intemperance

has lopped off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk; he then flies to art, and puts on a periwig, valuing himself upon an unnatural bundle of hairs, all covered with powder, that never grow on his head; but now should this our broomstick pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, though the sweepings of the finest lady's chamber, we should be apt to ridicule and despise its vanity. Partial judges that we are of our own excellences and other men's defaults!

But a broomstick, perhaps you will say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head: and, pray, what is a man but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually mounted on his rational, his head where his heels should be —grovelling on the earth! and yet, with all his faults, he sets up to be a universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances; rakes into every slut's corner of nature, bringing hidden corruptions to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before, sharing deeply in the very same pollutions he pretends to sweep away. His last days are spent in slavery to women, and generally the least deserving; till, worn to the stumps, like his brother-besom, he is either kicked out of doors, or made use of to kindle flames for others to warm themselves by.

II

Example of a "Times" Third Leader

The Sights of London

When the streets of London are filled every day with strangers bent on seeing the lions, there is a natural temptation for Londoners to assume the bored and preoccupied air, if not of lions themselves, at least of their keepers, to whom the dignified creatures are intimately familiar. Yet it is notorious how imperfectly most Londoners know London;

and if it is answered that London is too large to be known thoroughly by any smaller body than a committee, yet few Londoners would score very high marks in a fair mixed examination on general points that everybody ought to know, together with special questions on any chosen district. It may be charitable to the stranger to walk past Buckingham Palace or the Houses of Parliament with a preoccupied and hurried step, as part of the live furniture of the centre of the Empire; but it is a good deal more amusing to do in Rome as the visitor does, and by a deliberate adoption of the sight-seer's attitude to make one's own knowledge more extensive and peculiar.

While London's visitors gaze at London, Londoners may be permitted without discourtesy to steal a look at them; and at first sight they may be a little disappointing. The crowds of visitors this summer are predominantly English, or at least English-speaking, crowds; and though they are all the more welcome, this derogates from their richness as a spectacle. Gone, at least for the present, are the summer days when at any Bloomsbury corner might be met some statuesque and highly alien figure giving a decorative twist to the moustache with the help of a pocket mirror and a toothcomb. In this year of the Empire Exhibition, the crowds that are not of us are usually much like us; while if Londoners meet a good many people in a day who have not the stamp of cockneys, it is often difficult for the inexpert to determine whether they come from a distance of many days' travel, or only, perhaps, from some Midland county, two or three hours from London, where the ancient speech of the Angles still retains a modified but distinctive note. But the most novel diversion for the Londoner is to follow the example of his guests, and simply to look at London. The clear light of July shows up individual buildings, and even their loftiest details, with an attraction which we ignore from our habituation to a denser air. Westminster Abbey seen

from an omnibus top on a fresh summer evening is altogether different from the familiar pile in which the stone seems to blend with the mist until most details are half hidden. In the light of lingering midsummer sunsets, after the traffic abates, Georgian streets which a few hours earlier appear full of dull din recapture some of the peacefulness of an age before motor traffic. From high ground, or high buildings, we may realize that even modern London is not limitless, as the clear air of earlier summer reveals green and distant hills. Such aspects of London are often more striking to Londoners than to their visitors; but to catch them they must look with a stranger's eye.

CHAPTER VII
On Writing Letters

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On Writing Letters

When we write letters and diaries we climb into a new plane of literary expression. We at once become personal and intimate. We open into our lives a window into which the public may not stare. How intimate a part of oneself a letter may be is clear as soon as one thinks of a letter as a packet of thoughts fixed on paper by the magic of the written alphabet—a packet of thoughts as intimate as you like to make them, licked up and sealed and dropped into a box. Perhaps the box is on board a ship at sea, or in a far-away village, or at the other side of the world; nevertheless, by virtue of those same magical scratches on the envelope, arranged in certain sequence, it will find out your friend from among the eight millions of London—from the hundreds of millions who inhabit the earth; and your packet of thoughts turns up on his breakfast-table with the toast! He opens the packet and lets the thoughts fly—not only what you have written, but those more subtle thoughts or impressions that are read between the lines; for every sentence carries an atmosphere with it—something of your personality, something of your mood. That is why an intimate letter written overnight should be read again in the morning before it is posted. One is more critical and cold, less emotional and reckless, in the morning, and the letter is often wisely torn up.

Letters vary from extreme formality, as when one writes in the third person to accept an invitation, to extreme informality, as in writing to a very near relation. Between

the two extremes lie the business letter, the friendly letter, and the narrative letter.

For the business letter there is just one very sound rule: write in as clear and simple English as you can, without affectation, and without what has wisely been called 'jargon.' 'Commercial English' is a horrible travesty of language. Nobody likes it and nobody wants it. Business men in the Report on the Teaching of English have expressed themselves most emphatically against it. What could be more ludicrously tiresome than this, for instance: "Sir, We are in receipt of your esteemed favour of 6th inst., *re* gents' spring suitings——" or "Yours of even date per special messenger duly to hand"? This is not English, nor have such circumlocutions and Latin substitutions any intrinsic merit which entitle them to take the place of plain English. It is just a horrid pseudo-language, a commercial affectation without dignity or taste. It is a disease of language—nasty fungoid verbiage—and should be avoided at all costs.

There are certain conventions, however, which are reasonable. "I have the honour to submit," for instance; and "your obedient servant." Such phrases bear with them the dignity of old age; and they tend to a convenient uniformity. One would not sign oneself "Yours affectionately" to Their Lords of the Admiralty!

Harmless formal expressions are retained in informal letters for the sake of courtesy and uniformity. One must begin somehow, and why not with a little, courteous literary bow—the merest gesture of politeness? And so we begin our letters "*Dear* Mr. So-and-So," just as a courteous gentleman two thousand years ago used the formula "*Cicero Atticio Sal.*"

One may ring the changes on polite concluding formulae according to one's mood or the degree of acquaintanceship: "yours truly" is non-committal—it *may* express displeasure,

though, if your usual ending has been "yours sincerely." That phrase "yours sincerely" has a friendly sound: sincerely—*sine cera*, *without wax*—why on earth should one sign oneself "*yours without wax*"? The reason is interesting, and it is worth while looking the word out in the dictionary. "Yours heartily" is rare, but bluff and cheerful; "yours affectionately" is somewhat laborious and cat-like, but better than its abbreviation "yours affec." "Yours ever" or "yours always" are simple and very satisfying. But never, never finish with a "funny" phrase such as "yours till hell freezes." It may be harmless, but it leaves an extraordinarily mean impression.

The friendly or family letter needs no rules; indeed it is so personal and intimate that it can be bound by none. There are certain points, however, which ought to be borne in mind. First, don't be too egoistic. Your correspondent wants to know what you are doing and thinking, of course, and no one is so interesting as when he is "talking shop"—but don't begin with "I," continue with "I," and end with "me." Children begin their letters with "I hope you are quite well." The feeling is right, though the phrase is conventional. Persons of little education have extended the wish: "I hope you are quite well, as this leaves me at present with a bad cold in the nose." Grammar may be faulty, but the intention is right. I would give you another precept: I will not suggest hard-and-fast rules, for the harder and faster you stick to any rule the less you would be expressing *yourself*. Make up your mind, then, that in every friendly letter you write, however short, there shall be at least one thing worth the writing, expressed in a manner worth the reading. At least *one good thing written—one* amusing phrase, *one* really entertaining passage. Everyone knows what he likes to read in a letter—knows, that is, when he is entertained. Go and do likewise. Soon, when you have succeeded in one sentence, you will begin to feel a

little uneasy about the rest. "A bit flat perhaps, but this'll have to do." Later on, uneasiness grows into positive shame, but though your letter fails to satisfy you, you still feel that peradventure there be two good sentences the letter may be preserved. But there comes a time when you will regard the letter as a whole, and if it is not a good letter all through —out it goes into the Limbo.

A good letter is like a good influence or a good story—it induces others like itself. If you take trouble about your letters you will be surprised to find what a number of entertaining letters you will receive. It is one of the great pleasures of life, this letter writing and receiving; and incidentally letters are the best practice for writing in the world.

Next, the long narrative letter. In old days when posts were few and expensive, people wrote seldom and long. Turn up old family letters, and you will find page after page crossed and recrossed in thin spikey writing, each letter a family story in itself. I expect the cheap post, the fountain pen, and the general speeding up of life, killed the long narrative letter. For my part, until 1914 I never came across it except in novels and at the back of old bureaus. But with the War the narrative letter suddenly came into its own again —long letters from the dug-outs of France, or from far-distant Fronts: twenty-page letters from home to the men in the fighting line, to whom the post was their sole pleasure. The war-letters I have read are astonishingly good and interesting: one cannot fail to be struck by the quality of the letters contained in the many war-biographies. I possess a drawer full of splendid narrative letters from young naval officers all over the world.

One may say, I think, that the long letter has come into its own once more. It is rather a special art, for, unlike the story, it is intimately personal, and it requires no formal plot. Remember these points: no book ever written can

be half so interesting as one's own life—anybody's life—if only one has the art to write it down. Be natural in your long letter, and write—not quite as you would talk—but rather as you would talk if you had much of interest to say in a limited time. You must be terse and rapid without being breathless or disjointed. If you describe your surroundings, paint them with a few strong strokes—long-winded descriptions are a weariness to the flesh. If you have something funny to tell, tell it as shortly as you can, and be sure when you have written it that your story is as funny as the incident. The 'funny story' is out of place in a letter because it lacks the personal atmosphere; the funny incident or experience, told briefly and with real humour, will be read and re-read with delight.

There is no lack of examples in literature of letters in every style. Our library shelves groan with Lives and Letters. Note especially the difference between those which were meant for the public eye and those that probably were not. The Epistles of St. Paul are public letters; Cicero probably had a shrewd eye for publication; Lord Chesterfield's letters of advice to his son are too polished, worldly-wise, and in a sense impersonal to have been intended as private letters; Horace Walpole's clever news-talk is really talk for all,—to mankind rather than to Mann. Very many individual letters, too, are written with an eye to the general public: Dr. Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield, for instance, perhaps the most politely crushing rejoinder ever composed.

There is a tone about the truly private letter impossible to miss—so marked a tone that a century after the writer's death one still feels a little chary about reading such correspondence: one wonders whether it ought ever to have been published. There are letters of John Keats which one could not willingly dispense with; yet one cannot read them without a sense of prying. That great letter,

too, from Huxley to Charles Kingsley, written after the funeral of Huxley's little son—it is one of the most poignantly courageous letters in the language, and we cannot spare it for all its privacy.

No, there is no lack of models, and they are extraordinarily well worth reading. But you cannot learn to write except by writing; and I would urge again that you should start by saying—writing, that is—*one good thing*, and saying it in an arresting manner. If you have nothing else to say, put your one good thing on to a post-card, and leave it at that; don't smother it under a bushel of platitudes and indigestible chips of news.

EXAMPLES

I

Dr. Johnson's Letter to Lord Chesterfield.

Feb. 7th, 1755.

My Lord,

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World* that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself "le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre"—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once

addressed your lordship in public, I had lost all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord,

Your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

II

Napoleon's letter to the Prince Regent after his defeat at Waterloo.

Rochefort, July the 13th, 1815.

Royal Highness,

A victim to the factions which divide my country, and to the hostility of the greatest Powers of Europe, I have terminated my political career, and come, like Themistocles, to seat myself on the hearth of the British people. I put myself under the protection of their laws, which I claim from your Royal Highness as the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of my enemies.

Napoleon.

CHAPTER VIII
On Précis-Writing

CHAPTER VIII

On Précis-Writing

Précis-writing sounds dull—but it is not. There is something curiously satisfying about this particular form of composition—so unlike any other. You grapple with the subject, worry it, and tear it to pieces—you choose what is essential, and shape it and arrange it anew. The result is something short and entire—*multum in parvo*—a complete story reduced to simple, miniature form. All the other forms of composition we have been considering are three parts art and one part science. A précis is three parts science.

A précis is a potted story. If you are asked what the play you saw last night was about, and you give the inquirer a general summary, you are really making a rough-and-ready oral précis of the play. A written précis is much more scientific and exact than that, but the principle is the same. You choose the essentials from a mass of written matter, and weld them together into a concise and readable whole. Incidentally there is no better practice than précis-writing for the power of grasping essentials, and expressing them in terse and condensed phraseology.

Précis-writing is almost an exact science. There are certain rules which must be adhered to—one has found them out by experience—or the result will be slipshod and unbalanced. I will tell you the rules of simple précis-writing one by one—which only means that I will tell you the procedure which I have found from long experience gives the best results.

But first let me explain how to tackle a précis. It may be that you are given a packet of letters and telegrams all bearing on the same subject, and from these you are expected to extract the essence, and work it up into palatable form. Or it may be a mass of evidence, or a complex report of which you have to find the gist. Whatever it is there is only one way to start. Read your papers through with concentrated attention, without making any notes at all. Everything depends on this first reading. If you begin to make your précis as you go along, the result will be unbalanced: that is, you will include too much in the first half and will have to skimp the rest, or you will begin by putting in picturesque details that do not really matter, leaving no space for later essentials that do. After your first careful reading go through it all quickly once more. If you have read with sufficient care you will now see the salient points standing out in their true value, and the rest in perspective. Mark them with your pencil. It is a good plan to underline all the essential points which cannot be left out, to draw a wavy line down the margin of passages which are important but must be greatly condensed, and a dotted line against picturesque incidents which you would like to include if there is plenty of room for them, but not otherwise, for they are unessential.

We are now in a position to start; and the first thing to do is to choose a title. Now an artistic title will not do. An imaginative title such as Kipling's *The Man Who Was* is brilliant because it is infinitely suggestive without being in any way explicit. Jane Austen's great titles *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, are memorable partly for their shape, partly because they suggest so much and tell so little. A précis title must tell as much as possible in a few words, and suggest nothing beyond. "A Misunderstanding" would be a bad précis title; but "Précis of the Correspondence between the British Foreign Office and the

Imperial Japanese Government concerning Contraband during the Russo-Japanese War"—*that* is a suitable précis title. That is to say, the title must be a clear statement of what your précis is about.

Next, your précis must be arranged most carefully and exactly in paragraphs—each paragraph containing one topic of your story, and one only. The sole means of ensuring this result is to jot down the main headings—the leading topics—of your story on rough paper, and follow them paragraph by paragraph. You will find that a short précis of some 300 words will work out into about four paragraphs, but, of course, there are no hard-and-fast rules as to the number. You must use your own judgment. Try to give a clear idea of the situation or state of affairs in your first paragraph. Remember, too, that though precise you must be readable, and, as in the short story, it is often a good plan to finish with a little clinching paragraph to force into notice the conclusion of the whole.

Now for our third point. The matter of which you are making a précis—whether it is a report, or evidence, or a bundle of letters—all deals with past events and the persons therewith concerned. It follows, then, that the whole of your précis must be written in the form of the 'Reported Speech'—third person only, 'you' and 'I' becoming 'they'—and past tenses only, or future referred to from the past. For instance, suppose you were watching a football match and you heard the referee say quietly at half-time, "I can't talk to you here and now, but as soon as the match is over I shall take the first opportunity of telling you what I think of you," you might very well *report* to a friend what you had heard him say in this form: "He said he could not talk to him then and there, but as soon as the match was over he would take the first opportunity of telling him what he thought of him." You have hitched the whole thing into the past; and it is in this form, the form of

Reported Speech, that your whole précis must be written.

You are now in a position to begin making your précis. You might choose for practice three columns in the *Times* under the heading of Parliament. Read it through most carefully. Read it again and mark it. Make your title; jot down subjects of paragraphs on rough paper; and then you may begin to write, though there is a great deal more to learn yet. Keep this rule in the front of your mind all the time: Every point essential to the subject *must* be included; unessentials *may* be left out.

In choosing these essentials it is most important, as has been said, to group them into their own separate paragraphs. A number of witnesses giving evidence at a trial will easily arrange themselves in separate compartments. A report of a Royal Commission can be grouped without difficulty under its main headings. But when you have to make a précis of a packet of letters and telegrams the matter is not so easy. Now here is your rule: Do not proceed letter by letter; that is, don't make a little précis of every letter, and a separate paragraph of every little précis. *Group* your letters in bunches, all dealing with the same topic; make a summary of each group, as a paragraph in your main précis. Then thirty letters and telegrams will probably boil down to half a dozen paragraphs.

Next comes the question of Dates and Times. It is essential to know the dates on which the events you are describing took place. They must be put in—worked in—not stuck at the top of each paragraph as if you were writing a series of letters. When you are dealing with ships' logs or evidence at a trial it is often most important to know the exact time of day. Events may crowd on minute by minute, but one may vary the constant repetition of 'At 4.15,' 'At 4.30,' 'At 4.35,' by simply using some other phrase, such as 'Five minutes later.'

Then comes the important question of Names. Which are to be included and which left out? Well, the answer is simple: When a name carries weight, when it is important to know who is writing or speaking, or exactly where an event took place, put it in. Otherwise, do as you like. For instance, if you are making a précis of "The Inquiry into the Expenses of Officers in the Army," it is important to know that *Lord Roberts* is giving evidence. You would not just call him 'the witness'—for his name carries weight as an expert. On the other hand, suppose you are dealing with another sort of inquiry, in which it is recorded that Mrs. Higgins of 128, Mount Pleasant, was looking out of her window at 3 o'clock and saw a fire break out in the bottom storey of a pegamoid factory; here it is the evidence itself that matters, and nobody cares whether the witness's name is Mrs. Higgins. Be very careful to spell your names correctly; see that you know whether Mr. Thomson spells his name with a 'p' or without, whether Mr. Phillips insists upon two l's. Serious things may happen through the wrong spelling of a name, and that is why the names in reports sent in by Army Officers have to be spelt in block capitals. Consider, for instance, all those towns on the Somme whose names end in *-icourt*. Terrible things might have happened through a muddle in spelling.

Remember this point: it is you who are writing the story in its condensed and potted form, and your object is to present the whole subject in as clear and concise a manner as you can. So if evidence is given, for example, in Cockney dialect or outrageous slang, it is your business to extract the sense of the evidence and state it in the simplest and most straightforward English. But beyond this your own personality must be kept completely out of sight. Nobody wants to know who wrote the précis; and so you must never add a remark of your own to what you have gathered from the original papers. You must not write: "He then *most*

unfairly retorted . . ." or " The ambassador, *who was now quite obviously losing his temper* . . ." unless it is definitely stated that that was so in the original document. Even words and phrases such as " probably " and " it would seem " must only be used if you are quite sure they are justified, and definitely implied in the original.

Finally, avoid vain repetition; and be sure you preserve a correct balance. That is, do not be so carried away by amusing or picturesque detail that you use it to the exclusion of facts that really matter. You will soon see, when you read through your completed précis, whether the result is lop-sided. If it is, prune it down without remorse!

The result ought to be compact, well balanced, clear and full—and, above all, readable.

EXAMPLE

A Passage for Précis and an example of a finished Précis.

The Death of Captain Cook

From the Journal of Lieutenant George Gilbert

It being now about the 4th of February and the season approaching, after a stay of near a month we sailed from the bay with an intention of going to the westward to those islands we had been at before, to take in a supply of yams for sea, as they had got none here, but in this we were unfortunately prevented; for after working up along shore to the northward a considerable distance against a very strong breeze, we discovered a spring in the head of our foremast right athwart from one cheek to the other, which obliged us to put back to Carriacoak Bay, to repair it; and having a fair wind for it, we got in next day and moored as before.

We immediately began to unrig the ship as far as was necessary, and having raised a pair of shears with two main-

topmasts, we got out the foremast, which was hauled up upon the beach to be repaired, and the carpenters of both ships were sent on shore for that purpose. The place our tents were pitched upon before being close to the beach, we set them up again on the same spot for the people who were at work upon the mast, and Mr. King, our lieutenant, was ordered to superintend this duty, with a guard of about eight marines for their protection. The observatories were likewise sent on shore with the astronomical instruments; and several of our sails to repair, having split them while we were out.

The natives did not appear to receive us this time with that friendship that they had done before; our quick return seemed to create a kind of jealousy amongst them with respect to our intentions; as fearing we should attempt to settle there and deprive them of part if not the whole of their country. This idea Captain Cook took every method to remove, by telling and showing them the reason that obliged us to come in again, with which they apparently seemed to be very well satisfied. The third day we had been here, in the afternoon, one of the natives on board the *Discovery* stole a pair of tongs from off the armourer's forge, and got into his canoe with them; the alarm being given, several of them began to paddle away as fast as they could; upon this the master, with a midshipman and two men, instantly got into their jollyboat, and without any arms pursued the canoe they suspected, which reached the shore long before them, and the men had got out and hauled it upon the beach, where several others were lying. The master and midshipman landed amongst a great number of the natives, and were going to seize one of the canoes, when a chief who was present told them that it belonged to him and they should not have it; and indeed it is very probable but they mistook the one the man got into who committed the theft, either in putting off from the ship, among so many,

or in hauling up; but as they still foolishly persisted in attempting to take it away, the chief laid hold of them and gave them a severe beating with his hands, which the two men who remained in the jollyboat perceiving, they rowed off to a little distance and got clear; our pinnace, that was lying not far off waiting for Captain Cook with only the crew in her, who seeing the affair, went without any orders to their assistance; but as soon as they came near the shore, the natives laid hold of the boat and hauled her up high and dry upon the beach, and broke some of the oars; which obliged the crew to take to the water and swim to the jolly-boat, the Indians at the same time pelting them with stones. In a little time they were quiet, and called to the people in the boat to come on shore, and that they would let them have the pinnace; which they did, with the oars that remained, and likewise released the master and midshipman.

About an hour afterwards Captain Cook, hearing of the quarrel, was very angry, and gave our people a severe reprimand for their rashness; he walked round with one of the officers to the place where it happened, and found everything there very peaceable.

The next morning, which was the 14th February, 1779, at daylight the *Discovery* found her six-oared cutter missing, that had been moored at the buoy, which we immediately supposed to have been stolen by the natives, in consequence of the above quarrel. When Captain Cook was informed of it, he ordered a boat from each ship, well armed, to row off the mouth of the bay to prevent the canoes from going out, and if any attempt it, to seize and send them in again; at the same time, proposed to Captain Clerke for him to go on shore and endeavour to persuade the king to come on board, that he might confine him till the boat was returned, according to his usual custom in these cases, but he seemed to express a desire to decline it on account of his health. Captain Cook said no more about the matter, but went

himself with three boats—viz. a six-oared pinnace, in which he had with him a mate, the lieutenant of marines, and some of his men; a six-oared launch, with the third lieutenant, a mate, some marines, and a few additional seamen; and a four-oared cutter, with a mate and the midshipmen that rowed her; being in all, including the crews of the launch and pinnace, about thirty-eight people, with each a musket, a cutlass, and cartridge-boxes. Having landed at the town on the north side of the bay with the lieutenant of marines, a sergeant, corporal, and seven private men, he ordered the boats with the rest of the people to lie off at a little distance, and wait for him. He then proceeded with the marines under arms up to the king's house, which was about two hundred yards from the water side, where he found him with several chiefs and not less than two or three thousand of the natives. After the usual ceremonies had passed, the captain invited him to come on board, which at first he absolutely refused, but after being pressed for some time he seemed inclinable to consent, and it was thought he would have come had he not been prevented by the chiefs, who would not permit him, as in all probability they saw into the design. This enraged Captain Cook very much, as he was not accustomed to have his intentions frustrated by any person, and had but little command over himself in his anger; at this instant a canoe came over from the other side of the bay, and brought the natives intelligence that a chief was killed there by one of our boats firing on shore; upon this they began to arm themselves with spears and pieces of the branches of trees that they broke up in a hurry instead of clubs; and some of the chiefs had the same iron daggers that we had given them; the captain had with him a double-barrelled piece, one loaded with small shot, the other with ball, and a hanger by his side. They now began to press together and grew rather tumultuous, and some in particular insulting him, he beat them with the

butt end of his musket, which caused them to be still more so; Mr. Phillips, the lieutenant of marines, perceiving this, repeatedly told Captain Cook of the danger he apprehended they were in, and urged him to retire, which, as if Fate had determined he should fall, he took not the least notice of; but fired at one of them with small shot and wounded him, and a little afterwards at a chief with ball; but missing him killed the man that stood next to him outright, and although this enraged them to the highest degree, yet they then did not dare to attack him.

At last, finding it was impossible to accomplish his design, he ordered the marines to retreat, and was himself following them, and possibly would have got safe off, had not the people in the boats very unfortunately, on hearing the second report of his musket, begun to fire upon the natives, which threw them into a state of fury; the marines likewise on shore without orders followed their example; and Captain Cook had no sooner got to the water side and waved to the boats to give over firing, when one of the chiefs, more daring than the rest, stepped behind and stabbed him betwixt the shoulders with an iron dagger; another at that instant gave him a blow with a club on the head, by which he fell into the water; they immediately leaped in after and kept him under for a few minutes, then hauled him out upon the rocks and beat his head against them several times; so that there is no doubt but that he quickly expired. The marines likewise at the same time, after they had discharged their pieces, were closely attacked, and, not being able to load again, the corporal and three private men that could not swim were seized and killed upon the spot. The lieutenant, sergeant, and the other four leaped into the water, which was four or five feet deep close to the rocks, and escaped to the pinnace, which was lying within thirty yards of the shore; but by reason of the continual showers of stones that were thrown at them and the confusion of those people

getting in, they could not afford the least assistance to Captain Cook, and very narrowly escaped from being taken. The launch, that lay close without her, and the cutter, that was inshore at a little distance, both kept up a brisk fire for the space of ten or fifteen minutes till they were obliged to retire; having killed and wounded several of the natives, and caused the greatest part of them to retreat; and we were informed by the gentlemen in the cutter, who were the last that left the shore, that very few of them remained by the dead bodies when the launch and pinnace came away. During the firing on shore we saw a great number of the natives running away up an adjacent hill, at whom we fired five or six shot from our great guns, but our first lieutenant would not allow of any more.

When on the return of the boats informing us of the captain's death, a general silence ensued throughout the ship for the space of near half an hour;—it appearing to us somewhat like a dream that we could not reconcile ourselves to for some time. Grief was visible in every countenance; some expressing it by tears, and others by a kind of gloomy dejection, more easy to be conceived than described: for as all our hopes centred in him our loss became irreparable, and the sense of it was so deeply impressed upon our minds as not to be forgot.

Précis

Preliminary jottings for paragraph subjects :—

1. *They leave the island. Reasons for return.*
2. *Unfriendly reception by natives. Incidents.*
3. *February* 14, 1779. *Theft of the* Discovery's *cutter. Captain Cook takes steps to recover it. Trouble begins.*
4. *Death of Captain Cook.*
5. *Subsequent incidents and conclusion.*

Title of Précis.

Précis of an Account written by George Gilbert, Lieutenant of the *Discovery*, in his Journal, of the Incidents that led to the Killing of Captain Cook, and the Manner of his Death.

Précis.

On February 4th, 1779, the *Discovery* left the island where she had been lying for a month, and sailed away northward against a very strong breeze, but was obliged to put back into Carriocoak Bay, as it was found that the foremast was sprung. The foremast and several of the sails were taken ashore for repairs; tents were pitched; and a lieutenant with a guard of marines was ordered to superintend the work. This time, however, the reception of the Englishmen was far less friendly, the natives apparently imagining they had come to stay. On the third day a native on board the *Discovery* stole a pair of tongs, and made off with it in his canoe. He was quickly followed by the master, a midshipman, and two men in the jolly-boat, but got clear away. By way of retaliation, the Englishmen attempted to seize a canoe belonging to one of the natives, which resulted in a considerable disturbance with stone-throwing. Captain Cook was extremely annoyed, and reprimanded the boat's crew for their rashness.

Next day, Feb. 14th, it was found that the *Discovery's* six-oared cutter had been stolen. Captain Cook, after taking steps to prevent any canoes getting out of the bay, went himself, with a force of thirty-eight men, each armed with a musket and cutlass, landed at the town on the north side of the bay, and proceeded with ten marines to the king's house with the idea of inducing the king to come on board, and then holding him as a hostage for the boat. The king refused, to Captain Cook's extreme annoyance. News being brought at this moment that a chief had been killed on the

other side of the bay, the natives began to arm themselves, and became extremely threatening. Captain Cook took no notice of the advice of his lieutenant, but opened fire on them, and killed a man outright, which enraged them still more, though as yet they did not dare attack him. At last Captain Cook gave orders to retreat, and could possibly have got off safely, but that the people in the boat and the marines on shore opened fire without orders. The natives were furious; and one of the chiefs, armed with a dagger, stabbed Captain Cook in the back, while another clubbed him on the head. For some minutes they held Captain Cook under the water, then, dragging him out, they beat his head on a rock. Meanwhile, the corporal and three marines were killed, and the rest narrowly escaped in spite of a brisk fire kept up from the launch and the cutter. While the fight was going on, and the boats were making their way back to the ship, five or six shots from the big gun were fired at the fleeing natives. Very few remained by the dead bodies.

The news of Captain Cook's death was received on board the *Discovery* with inexpressible grief; for it was realized by all that their loss was irreparable.

CHAPTER IX
On Keeping a Diary

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On Keeping a Diary

I HAVE suggested that there is no better practice in the world in the writing of English than the composition of one's own personal letters. They are very intimate; they are condensed—or should be; and, moreover, they are written for the information or entertainment of *somebody else*, so that in writing a letter one deliberately lays oneself open to criticism (which, by the way, does not mean adverse judgment unless that sort of criticism is deserved).

Diary writing is more intimate still—for it is not to be seen even by friendly eyes; and there is no critic but oneself. As far as the art of writing is concerned, the keeping of a diary tends to ease in the sheer manipulation of words, and simple self-expression, rather than precision of style or careful arrangement with a view to its effect upon somebody else. To yourself you may be as truthful as you dare. You may laugh at other people's faces or ideals without offence—for you are only telling yourself with more precision what you already know. You may nail your own faults to the paper till you say, like Samuel Pepys, "God forgive me!" But what does Pepys mind, now that the whole world knows them?

In a word, the secret of diary-writing is absolute truthfulness. Its advantages are threefold: it is a great aid to the art of self-expression in words; it clarifies your thoughts and clears up difficulties; and it helps you to know yourself.

Diaries are of three kinds. There is the official diary—the journal that is written with a view to being read by

others beside yourself; and the private and intimate diary kept in cipher or under lock and key. We will discuss each kind of diary and illustrate each by examples. The journal that is worked up long afterwards from notes or from memory is not a true diary at all.

The most important form of official diary is the Ship's Log. At this moment thousands are being written up, all over the seven seas—bald in statement and meticulously accurate. If it ever falls to any of you to write up a ship's log, remember these two essentials—clearness and absolute accuracy. To the landsman they may make sorry reading, and yet they are not untouched by romance. Read the log of the *Swiftsure*, for instance, jotted down while the Battle of the Nile was in progress. In jerky, telegraphic style it tells how they dropped anchor in six fathoms; the *Franklin* three cables astern; the huge *Orient* on the starboard bow. How a ship without lights crossed their bows, and how they were ready to open fire upon her. They hailed her, and she replied, "*Ballerophon* going out of action disabled." Then the blowing up of the French flag-ship and the rescue of survivors; the end of the battle; the scene at dawn; the burial of the *Majestic's* captain, and the minute guns. I know many descriptions of that amazing battle, some of them written in magnificent prose, but none so telling as that scrappy log jotted down at intervals during the night.

Perhaps you do not wish to keep an intimate diary in which you may express your inmost thoughts; and, indeed, unless it is a pleasure to you to do so, you had much better not. There is still the second kind of diary, the journal written to be read by all and sundry. If whenever you take a holiday you make it a rule to fill a note-book with an account of your doings and adventures, the things that have delighted you and the people who have amused you, you will find as years go on, and your fresh-air journals increase in number, that nothing brings back delightful times in so vivid a manner.

For that reason alone holiday journals are well worth keeping.

Little holiday note-book diaries are the small relations of those great journals of adventure and discovery which have filled the world with admiration. There is Captain Cook's journal of the second voyage, for instance, with its impression of stupendous achievement and courage in the face of hardship and misery—surely one of the great books of the world. (The journal of the second voyage remains just as Captain Cook wrote it; in the first and third voyages, Cook's blunt and straightforward language has been 'improved' by a veneer of circumlocutions and grandiloquent phraseology; and the simple Captain is made to speak like a classical pedant.) There is Darwin's journal of the *Voyage of the "Beagle,"*—so important a voyage in the history of the world's thought. There is Captain Scott's diary, found by his body in the tent, buried in South Polar snow. There are sentences in that diary which have become almost household words.

The Khartum journal of General Gordon will send a note of pathos and courage down the centuries; while the Highland Journal of Queen Victoria will be read not for the style, which is quite undistinguished, nor for the matter ("I walked with the Duchess of Norfolk"; "dearest Albert had been running about a great deal and was so sunburnt"; "poor Viky sat on a wasp's nest and was badly stung")—but because it was written by a great queen who was also a simple little lady.

Evelyn's diary, with all its polish and circumspection, was obviously written for posterity to read. He was a cultured gentleman, and knew it—cultured, urbane and brilliantly clever; so that, as Pepys said, "he must be allowed a little for a little conceitedness." John Wesley's diary, too, can hardly have been written for himself alone—even in the passage in which he makes his austere resolve "never to

laugh—no, not for one moment." It is an amazing work, written daily, sometimes hourly, during sixty years of a most strenuous life; and it bears all through the stamp of his personality and high resolve. We could easily multiply examples of great diaries written for us all to read—from Fielding's jolly *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, to Barbellion's poignant *Diary of a Disappointed Man*. But these few examples will suffice.

We will now discuss the true diary—the diary written for oneself alone, into which one may precipitate thoughts and emotions and fix them before they have flown off into the Limbo. I cannot *advise* anyone to keep a diary. The impulse will come of its own accord—or it will not. I can only say that for him who achieves the diary-habit, it becomes a happy and a life-long resource. When Pepys, the greatest of diarists, had to relinquish his diary on account of failing eyesight, he says, "It is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave." I would say this, too, that except for letter-writing there can be no better practice in self-expression in language than the keeping of a journal.

Pepys, I have said, was the greatest of diarists; and to this I think everyone will assent. He wrote in shorthand cypher, as everybody knows; he told the truth about himself and about everybody else as far as in him lay, and in so doing he produced a work of genius, a living book, the like of which is not to be found in all literature. Why he did it no one can say, though there are all sorts of suggestions and theories. He probably wrote it just because he *had* to—an outlet, a means of self-expression for a personality brimming over with life and humour. He wrote in a style that is great because it is unique and extraordinarily characteristic and personal. Though his descriptions of people and events are often magnificently terse and true, his style is not polished, nor even grammatical. It is great because it is simply Pepys.

He seems to have been able to write in any and every mood; he wrote about everything in which he was interested, and as he was interested in everything and everybody that came his way with a keen personal interest, one may open his diary at any page and read it with zest. As a personality Pepys is better known to us than any man who ever lived, with the possible exception of Dr. Johnson. No, I do not think he gives place even to Boswell's hero. We know him in his zeal for his work—and wonderfully efficient he was; his intense love of music; how susceptible he was to pretty faces; how naughtily he behaved in church; how fond he was of his wife, and yet what dreadful squabbles they had (once when she would not stop nagging at him he read a book of hydrostatics aloud till she grew tired); how strict he was with his servants ("I became angry and boxed my boy that I do hurt my thumb so that I was not able to stir all the day after and in great pain"); what jolly dinner parties he had—with his "two dozen larks all in a dish," "a tanzy and two neats' tongues," "a hash of rabbits," "and a dish of roasted fowl, cost me about 30/-." He loved to surround himself with interesting people, and to collect interesting books; but none of his many friends was more interesting than himself, and no book in the Pepys Library at Cambridge can compare with his own inimitable work.

One more old diary I must cite. I came across it in the British Museum; before that it had only been a name to me —I had heard that Dr. Johnson used to grunt and chuckle over it. It is the Spiritual Diary of Dr. Rutty; and I too chuckled till my neighbour in the Library wondered what on earth there was to laugh at in those dusty old tomes. Poor Dr. Rutty: he was so concerned about his temper, and his fondness for eating and drinking. "Fourth month 1756. Still not fear enough in eating, drinking and scolding," he writes. And later: "A little incubus last night on too much spinach." "Dogged," he says again, "I

abhor myself a little." "A little swinish at dinner." "Sickish at a feast." "A little piggish at stuffing with vegetables." "A luxurious dinner on apple pie." "Feasted swinishly and to inflation: two dishes hurt." And the next day, "Gripes from excess." "Snapped at a pauper in the streets," he says. But sometimes he is more complacent, for once he writes, "An affront in the street; an unknown man pinched me. I resisted it with calmness and resolution."

A truly lovely book! And if in a hundred and fifty years time our own diaries give the joy that Dr. Rutty's Spiritual Diary has given me, surely we are justified in keeping them.

EXAMPLES

I

Account of the Fire of London, from "Evelyn's Diary."

2nd September. This fatal night, about ten, began the deplorable fire, near Fish-street, in London.

3rd. I had public prayers at home. The fire continuing, after dinner I took coach with my wife and son, and went to the Bankside in Southwark, where we beheld that dismal spectacle, the whole City in dreadful flames near the water-side; all the houses from the Bridge, all Thames-street, and upwards towards Cheapside, down to the Three Cranes, were now consumed; and so returned, exceeding astonished what would become of the rest.

The fire having continued all this night (if I may call that night which was light as day for ten miles round about, after a dreadful manner), when conspiring with a fierce eastern wind in a very dry season, I went on foot to the same place; and saw the whole south part of the City burning from Cheapside to the Thames, and all along Cornhill (for it likewise kindled back against the wind, as well as forward),

Tower-street, Fenchurch-street, Gracious-street, and so along to Baynard's Castle, and was now taking hold of St. Paul's Church, to which the scaffolds contributed exceedingly. The conflagation was so universal, and the people so astonished, that, from the beginning, I know not by what despondency, or fate, they hardly stirred to quench it; so that there was not nothing heard, or seen, but crying out and lamentation, running about like distracted creatures, without at all attempting to save even their goods; such a strange consternation there was upon them, so as it burned both in breadth and length, the churches, public halls, Exchange, hospitals, monuments, and ornaments; leaping after a prodigious manner from house to house, and street to street, at great distances one from the other. For the heat, with a long set of fair and warm weather, had even ignited the air, and prepared the materials to conceive the fire, which devoured, after an incredible manner, houses, furniture, and everything. Here, we saw the Thames covered with goods floating, all the barges and boats laden with what some had time and courage to save, as, on the other side, the carts, etc., carrying out to the fields, which for many miles were strewed with movables of all sorts, and tents erected to shelter both people and what goods they could get away. Oh, the miserable and calamitous spectacle! such as haply the world had not seen since the foundation of it, nor will be outdone till the universal conflagration thereof. All the sky was of a fiery aspect, like the top of a burning oven, and the light seen above forty miles round about for many nights. God grant mine eyes may never behold the like, who now saw above ten thousand houses all in one flame! The noise and cracking and thunder of the impetuous flames, the shrieking of women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses, and churches, was like a hideous storm; and the air all about so hot and inflamed, that at the last one was not able to approach it, so that they

were forced to stand still, and let the flames burn on, which they did, for near two miles in length and one in breadth. The clouds also of smoke were dismal, and reached, upon computation, near fifty miles in length. Thus, I left it this afternoon burning, resemblance of Sodom, or the last day. It forcibly called to my mind that passage—*non enim hic habemus stabilem civitatem:* the ruins resembling the picture of Troy. London was, but is no more! Thus, I returned.

4th September. The burning still rages, and it is now gotten as far as the Inner Temple. All Fleet-street, the Old Bailey, Ludgate-hill, Warwick-lane, Newgate, Paul's-chain, Watling-street, now flaming, and most of it reduced to ashes; the stones of Paul's flew like grenadoes, the melting lead running down the streets in a stream, and the very pavements glowing with fiery redness, so as no horse, nor man, was able to tread on them, and the demolition had stopped all the passages, so that no help could be applied. The eastern wind still more impetuously driving the flames forward. Nothing but the Almighty power of God was able to stop them; for vain was the help of man.

5th. It crossed towards Whitehall; but oh! the confusion there was then at that Court! It pleased his Majesty to command me, among the rest, to look after the quenching of Fetter-lane end, to preserve (if possible) that part of Holborn, whilst the rest of the gentlemen took their several posts, some at one part, and some at another (for now they began to bestir themselves, and not till now, who hitherto had stood as men intoxicated, with their hands across), and began to consider that nothing was likely to put a stop but the blowing up of so many houses as might make a wider gap than any had yet been made by the ordinary method of pulling them down with engines. This some stout seamen proposed early enough to have saved near the whole City, but this some tenacious and avaricious men, aldermen, etc.,

would not permit, because their houses must have been of the first. It was, therefore, now commended to be practised; and my concern being particularly for the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, near Smithfield, where I had many wounded and sick men, made me the more diligent to promote it; nor was my care for the Savoy less. It now pleased God, by abating the wind, and by the industry of the people, when almost all was lost infusing a new spirit into them, that the fury of it began sensibly to abate about noon, so as it came no farther than the Temple westward, nor than the entrance of Smithfield, north: but continued all this day and night so impetuous towards Cripplegate and the Tower, as made us all despair. It also brake out again in the Temple; but the courage of the multitude persisting, and many houses being blown up, such gaps and desolations were soon made as, with the former three days' consumption, the black fire did not so vehemently urge upon the rest as formerly. There was yet no standing near the burning and glowing ruins by near a furlong's space.

The coal and wood wharfs, and magazines of oil, rosin, etc., did infinite mischief, so as the invective which a little before I had dedicated to his Majesty and published, giving warning what probably might be the issue of suffering those shops to be in the City, was looked upon as a prophecy.

The poor inhabitants were dispersed about St. George's Fields, and Moorfields, as far as Highgate, and several miles in circle, some under tents, some under miserable huts and hovels, many without a rag, or any necessary utensils, bed or board, who from delicateness, riches, and easy accommodations in stately and well-furnished houses, were now reduced to extremest misery and poverty.

In this calamitous condition, I returned with a sad heart to my house, blessing and adoring the distinguishing mercy of God to me and mine, who, in the midst of all this ruin, was like Lot, in my little Zoar, safe and sound.

7th. I went this morning on foot from Whitehall as far as London Bridge, through the late Fleet-street, Ludgate-hill by St. Paul's, Cheapside, Exchange, Bishopsgate, Aldersgate, and out to Moorfields, thence through Cornhill, etc., with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was: the ground under my feet so hot, that it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the meantime, his Majesty got to the Tower by water, to demolish the houses about the graff, which, being built entirely about it, had they taken fire and attacked the White Tower, where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten down and destroyed all the bridge, but sunk and torn the vessels in the river, and rendered the demolition beyond all expression for several miles about the country.

At my return, I was infinitely concerned to find that goodly church, St. Paul's, now a sad ruin, and that beautiful portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repaired by the late King) now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing remaining entire but the inscription in the architrave, showing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defaced! It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heat had in a manner calcined, so that all the ornaments, columns, friezes, capitals, and projectures of massy Portland stone flew off, even to the very roof, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six acres by measure) was totally melted. The ruins of the vaulted roof falling, broke into St. Faith's, which being filled with the magazines of books belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consumed, burning for a week following. It is also observable that the lead over the altar at the east end was untouched, and among the divers monuments the body of one bishop remained entire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable church, one of the most ancient pieces of early

piety in the Christian world, besides near one hundred more. The lead, iron-work, bells, plate, etc., melted, the exquisitely wrought Mercers' Chapel, the sumptuous Exchange, the august fabric of Christ Church, all the rest of the Companies' halls, splendid buildings, arches, entries, all in dust; the fountains dried up and ruined, whilst the very waters remained boiling; the voragos of subterranean cellars, wells, and dungeons, formerly warehouses, still burning in stench and dark clouds of smoke; so that in five or six miles traversing about I did not see one load of timber unconsumed, nor many stones but what were calcined white as snow.

The people, who now walked about the ruins, appeared like men in some dismal desert, or rather, in some great city laid waste by a cruel enemy; to which was added the stench that came from some poor creatures' bodies, beds, and other combustible goods. Sir Thomas Gresham's statue, though fallen from its niche in the Royal Exchange, remained entire, when all those of the Kings since the Conquest were broken to pieces. Also the standard in Cornhill, and Queen Elizabeth's effigies, with some arms on Ludgate, continued with but little detriment, whilst the vast iron chains of the City streets, hinges, bars, and gates of prisons, were many of them melted and reduced to cinders by the vehement heat. Nor was I yet able to pass through any of the narrow streets, but kept the widest; the ground and air, smoke and fiery vapour, continued so intense, that my hair was almost singed, and my feet unsufferably surbated.[1] The by-lanes and narrow streets were quite filled up with rubbish; nor could one have possibly known where he was, but by the ruins of some church or hall, that had some remarkable tower or pinnacle remaining.

I then went towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seen two hundred thousand people of all ranks and degrees dispersed, and lying along by their heaps of

[1] Bruised.

what they could save from the fire, deploring their loss; and, though ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one penny for relief, which to me appeared a stranger sight than any I had yet beheld. His Majesty and Council indeed took all imaginable care for their relief, by proclamation for the country to come in and refresh them with provisions.

Still, the plague continuing in our parish, I could not, without danger, adventure to our church.

10*th September*. I went again to the ruins; for it was now no longer a city.

13*th*. I presented his Majesty with a survey of the ruins, and a plot for a new City, with a discourse on it; whereupon, after dinner, his Majesty sent for me into the Queen's bed-chamber, her Majesty and the Duke only being present. They examined each particular, and discoursed on them for near an hour, seeming to be extremely pleased with what I had so early thought on.

II

Quotations from "Pepys' Diary."

Pepys in the Country

The women and W. Hewer and I walked upon the Downes where a flock of sheep was; and the most pleasant and innocent sight that ever I saw in my life—we find a shepherd and his little boy reading, far from any houses or sight of people, the Bible to him; so I made the boy read to me, which he did, with the forced tone that children do usually read, that was mighty pretty, and then I did give him something, and went to the father and talked with him; and I find he had been a servant in my cozen Pepys' house, and told me what was become of their old servants. He did content himself mightily in my liking his boy's reading, and did bless God for him, the most like one of the old Patriarchs

that ever I saw in my life, and it brought those thoughts of the old age of the world in my mind for two or three days after. We took notice of his woollen knit-stockings of two colours mixed, and of his shoes shod with iron both at the toe and heels, and with great nails in the soles of his feet, which was mighty pretty; and, taking notice of them, "Why," says the poor man, "the downes you see are full of stones, and we are fain to shoe ourselves thus; and these," says he, "will make the stones fly till they sing before me." I did give the poor man something for which he was mighty thankful, and I tried to cast stones with his horne crooke. He values his dog mightily, that would turn a sheep any way that he would have him, when he goes to fold them: so we posted thence with mighty pleasure in the discourse we had with this poor man, and Mrs. Turner, in the common fields there, did gather one of the prettiest nosegays that ever I saw in my life. So to our coach, and looked upon Mr. Evelyn's house; and so over the common, and through Epsom Towne to our inne, in the way stopping a poor woman with her milk-pail, and in one of my gilt tumblers did drink out bellyfulls of milk, better than any creame; and so to our inne.

Pepys and his Servants

I sent my boy home for some papers, when he staying longer than I would have him, I became angry and boxed my boy that I do hurt my thumb so that I was not able to stir all the day after and in great pain.

. . . . . .

Up and to the office, where we sat all the morning, and then home to dinner, and found it so well done, above what I did expect from my maid Susan, now Jane is gone, that I did call her in and give her sixpence.

. . . . . .

At supper hearing by accident of my mayds letting in a rogueing Scotch woman that haunts the office, to helpe them to washe and scoure in our house, and that very lately, I fell mightily out, and made my wife, to the disturbance of the house and neighbours, to beat our little girle (Susan), and then we shut her down into the cellar, and there she lay all night. So we to bed.

. . . . . .

And so lay long in the morning, till I heard people knock at my door, and I took it to be about eight o'clock (but afterwards I found myself a little mistaken), and so I rose and ranted at Will and the maid, and swore I could find my heart to kick them downstairs, which the maid mumbled at mightily.

A Jolly Evening

We had invited to a venison party Mr. Batelier and his sister Mary, Mrs. Mercer, her daughter Anne, Mr. Le Brun, and W. Hewer; and so we supped, and very merry. And then about nine o'clock to Mrs. Mercer's gate, where the fire and boys expected us, and her son had provided abundance of serpents and rockets; and there mighty merry (my Lady Pen and Pegg going there with us, and Nan Wright) till about twelve at night, flinging our fireworks, and burning one another and the people over the way. And at last our businesses being most spent, we into Mrs. Mercer's, and there mighty merry, smutting one another with candle grease and soot, till most of us were like devils. And that being done, then we broke up, and to my house; and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went, and then fell into dancing. (W. Batelier dancing well), and dressing, him and I and one Mr. Banister (who with his wife came over also with us), like women; and Mercer put on a suit of Tom's, like a boy, and mighty mirth we had. Mercer danced a jigg; and Nan

Wright and my wife and Peg Penn put on perriwigs. Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry; and then parted and to bed.

Aug. 15*th.* Mighty sleepy; slept till past eight of the clock.

III

John Wesley decides never to laugh.

1738. With regard to my own behaviour, I now renewed and wrote down my former resolutions :—

(1) To use absolute openness and unreserve with all I should converse with.

(2) To labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging myself in any the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter,—no, not for a moment.

(3) To speak no word which does not tend to the glory of God; in particular, not to talk of worldly things. Others may, nay, must. But what is that to thee?

(4) To take no pleasure which does not tend to the glory of God; thanking God every moment for all I do take, and therefore rejecting every sort and degree of it which I feel I cannot so thank Him *in* and *for*.

CHAPTER X

Sound and Sense

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We have already discussed the importance of choosing—deliberately selecting—words for their meaning. I am now going to discuss the choice of sounds for their sense, which is not quite the same thing. In choosing the right word for its meaning one takes a great many things, half consciously, into consideration. In order that the word may be an exact symbol of the idea expressed, one chooses it for its atmosphere, its associated ideas, its so-called colour, its length and shape, and, of course, its sound. In choosing the sound for the sense everything else is subordinated to this sound suggestion: one relies almost entirely upon the sound—and ideas suggested by the sound—to make the word or phrase an exact symbol of the thought.

All words are sound symbols. Even the written word is primarily a sound symbol; and I cannot imagine reading a great poem and regarding the words as sight symbols alone; for what then happens to the music which is the basis of all poetry? As a matter of fact I believe everyone hears in his mind the sound of the words he reads. Write C-A-T on paper, and I defy anyone, even the sceptic who stoppeth his ears, not to hear the *sound* of the little word 'cat.' No one can read a sea-poem by Swinburne without hearing the music of the words, and of the wind and the sea, go swinging through his mind. I do not know how it may be with others, but I myself when I read a letter from a friend, invariably 'hear' him read it aloud in his own voice.

Choose the sound for the sense when you write, just as you do, so naturally, when you talk, only in writing you must choose with more subtlety. Notice first the choice of Proper Names—which, after all, are merely private noises—sounds grunted or squeaked or purred at you by your godfathers and godmothers, and thereby settled upon you as your private noise for life. How is it that some names seem to fit so well, while others are so incongruous? What do you mean when you say "I could have guessed his name was Rupert—he is *just* like it"; or "I never saw anyone less like a Priscilla in my life"? Why did Swift call the island of his little people "Lilliput" and the land of the giants Brobdignag? And why is the little Brobdignagian maiden forty feet high named Glumdalclitch, while the name of the emperor of Lilliput ends in Mulley Ully Gue? The answer is self-evident; it is for the same reason that you call your little fox-terrier "Rip" or "Kim," while if you had a tame elephant you would never dream of calling him "Snap" or "Perky." When I was a small boy I possessed a tortoise of incredible pomposity and weight. We should never have dreamt of calling him "Fluff" or "Ping-Pong." We called him "Uncle James." It is the *sound* of these names that makes all the difference, as the effect of the same name differently pronounced will show. The name 'Samuel' gives me an impression of strength and frank honesty. But pronounce it as in the ridiculous rhyme—

Samuël oh! Sam-uël
Beware the awful cam-uël!—

and what impression do we get now? "Mabel" was once a very lovely name till mispronunciation killed the music in it. The sound of town names is wonderfully suggestive: Between "Cambridge" and "Caimbr'dge" lies the gulf which divides Gown from Town; and one may hear the roll of the traffic in the name "London." The greatest

writers use the sound of proper names with wonderful effect, and we shall do well to take the hint.

As everybody knows, there are a vast number of words in the language—onomatopœic words they are called—which were deliberately coined to imitate a sound. Bird-notes such as 'peewit,' 'cuckoo,' 'chiffchaff,' give names to the birds; hoot, clang, crash, jingle, thunder, and thousands more, are definite sound-words. A minute's thought will suggest dozens more to your mind. The language is full of them, and they are perfectly easy to use. The real fun begins when you wish to suggest sounds by means of words or phrases which have not been specially coined to imitate them. That is an art, a point of style, well worth cultivating; for to be successful you must be able to hear and appreciate the music of vowel sounds, and the effect of every kind of consonant. English poetry is full of such words and phrases. Scores of lovely lines crowd into my mind at this moment; but I will have none of them, for it is with prose, not poetry, that we are dealing.

When fitting the sound to the sense in prose you must be careful to conceal your art, or it will look like a trick. Once more I would urge you to say the sentence in your head before you put it down on paper: you will then hear for yourself whether the sound corresponds with the sense.

One or two examples will make my meaning clear. There is a sentence from Stevenson: "One of the rocks bounded over the edge of the cliff and went pounding down into the valley." Three times in that sentence we can hear the rock,—and yet the effect is not produced by a trick. Or this from Melville's *Moby Dick*: "How the wild winds blow it; they whip it about as the torn shreds of sail lash the tossed ship they cling to." Here nothing is overdone;—indeed, it is not *easy* to see how he gets his effect; but the effect is there. Again, there are words, and collocations of words, which are sheer music in themselves, a melody in

the mind, even when some of the most musical words convey no more than a faint image. A little while ago London was thrilled by a daring jewel robbery in the West End. This sordid little incident inspired the leader-writer of the *Evening Standard* to produce an article, which I read with delight, in which he spoke of the "Romance of Jewels," and the never-failing inspiration in the sound of jewel names. He quoted in full the jewel passage from the New Testament—a passage which is music to the ear, but which conveys little more to most of us than a general impression of rare loveliness and brilliance. Let me quote the lines once more: "The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." There are some sounds that dazzle and gleam and glow, and these are of them.

There is one more aspect of sound-sense with which you should be familiar—and that is Prose-Rhythm. That there is a rhythm of prose as well as of verse has been known for a very long time—certainly since Aristotle, probably much longer; but the vast majority of people do not know about it, or have not bothered to notice it. Prose rhythm is entirely different from poetry rhythm, but it is just as real, and it can be cultivated and practised to the enormous advantage of prose style, from the sense it gives one of new possibilities in Prose. One cannot read, for instance, De Quincey's *Opium Eater*, Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn-burial*, above all the Authorized Version of the Bible, without being struck by the wonderfully musical quality of the prose. Yet it *is* prose, and not poetry. Take any sentence from *Urn-burial*, and you realize at once that the words have been deliberately chosen and arranged for a beautiful rhythmic effect. Here is a scrap taken at random: "But to subsist

in bones, and be but pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration." One cannot fail to realize the lovely rhythm, so different from that of poetry. This again from the same book: "Some being of the opinion of Thales, that water was the originall of all things, thought it most equall to submit unto the principle of putrefaction, and conclude in a moist relentment." (That final phrase "and conclude in a moist relentment" seems to me to be quite perfect.) And let me quote you a passage, lovely in its sound as in its sense, from that most companionable of books, *The Compleat Angler* by old Izaak Walton: "But the Nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud musick out of her little instrumental throat, that it might make mankind to think that miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say 'Lord, what musick hast Thou provided for the Saints in Heaven, when thou affordest bad men such musick on Earth!'"

Above all, we find the most perfect prose-rhythm in that miracle of great literature, the Authorized Version. Listen to this sentence from Isaiah: "Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" Can you conceive more perfect prose-rhythm than that—or more musical word-sounds? Note, too, the effect of those three 'i's,' the open 'i' which gives the English language so much of its brilliance and light. Then read the great passage on Charity, first in the Authorized Version, and then as it has been Revised, the word "Charity" being changed to "Love." The rhythm is spoilt, the charm and delicacy gone. "Charity suffereth long and is kind," "Charity never faileth"; and then, "Love never faileth," "Love suffereth long." It is a thousand pities; but one must remember that Bishop

Ellicott, great scholar as he was, did not know the tune of the National Anthem when he heard it.

This is not the place to suggest a satisfactory theory of prose-rhythm—to do more than point out its existence, its supreme importance—to those who had not noticed it. It is a difficult subject, but this is the main secret—that whereas the rhythm of poetry is formal, metrical and repetitive, the key to prose-rhythm is a well-balanced and judicious *variety*.

EXAMPLES

I

The music of vowel-sounds. (2 Samuel xviii., xix.)

And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe?

And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

II

Rhythmic Prose from the Authorized Version. (1 Cor. xiii.)

Charity

(*This is one of the supreme passages in all Literature. Substitute the word "Love" for "Charity," as in the Revised Version, and the music of this marvellous rhythm is woefully spoilt.*)

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

III

Two Examples of Rhythmic Prose; from De Quincey's "Confessions of an English Opium Eater."

The Pleasures of Opium

O just, subtle, and all-conquering opium! that, to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that "tempt the spirit to rebel," bringest an assuaging balm; eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath, pleadest effectually for relenting pity, and through one night's heavenly sleep callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure with blood; O just and righteous opium! that to the chancery of dreams summonest, for the triumphs of despairing innocence, false witnesses; and confoundest perjury; and dost reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges;—thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles—beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and, "from the anarchy of dreaming sleep," callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the "dishonours of the grave." Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium!

An Opium Nightmare

Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sunlights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Hindostan. From kindred feelings, I soon

brought Egypt and her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paraquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia; Vishnu haunted me; Seeva lay in wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. Thousands of years I lived, and was buried in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.

CHAPTER XI
On Criticism

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We have already noticed, in a previous chapter on the choice of Words, that constant use tends to dull their significance. Such words as 'awful' and 'absolutely' are used without reference to their true meaning. Some words tend to change their implication in course of time. The word 'prevent,' for instance, now usually means to get in the way, and hinder, but in the prayer "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings," we still use the word in its old and quite contrary sense of 'going before' to remove difficulties. And it sometimes happens that the meaning of a word will become restricted to part of its function, and grow distorted by popular use. Such a word is 'Criticism.'

It is surely a deplorable thing that this word should have been so far pauperized that in ordinary speech it means no more than the passing of *adverse* judgment. "Don't be too critical" has come to mean "Don't judge harshly, or pick too many holes." When it is said, "He has done his best, and I don't think you ought to criticize," it is obvious that the word "criticize" is used in the sense of "disparage." That is not the true meaning of 'Criticism,' and it is a great pity that the word should be popularly misinterpreted in this way. It is too late to stop it in its downward career, but one may at least apply the brake.

No, the part of the Critic is to judge with all the taste and skill and experience at his command, not with the idea of picking holes, and finding weak spots, but with the object

of showing those whose insight is less clear, less cultured, than his own, what is admirable, and what should be rejected.

The literary critic must be actuated solely by love of what is best in literature. He must search for the best, and interpret the best; and if this entails pruning out what is weak, or shoddy, or poisonous, that is a secondary, and not, as so many people think, the primary function.

Those of us who love literature are sure to be called upon for our opinion—to criticize, in the right sense, for those who have less, or no, confidence in their own judgment. It is a great responsibility, but it must not be shirked.

Suppose someone sends you a book which has intrigued him, and asks your opinion about it—or suppose he has been writing poems, and wants you to pass judgment on them: it is surely a feeble affair if you write back and decline on the ground that you "know what you like, but you can't say exactly *why* you like it." That may be mildly interesting—he may even feel flattered by your vague approval; but it is no *help*. "But," someone will say, "that is perfectly true; I *don't* know why I like it." My answer to that is that it will be very well worth while to try to find out. Many things will be learnt on the way, and if you are not cocksure and dogmatic you will help others to learn, too.

The power of criticizing the creative work of other people may not be so distinguished a faculty as the creative power itself; but at the very least it teaches one to observe when one reads, and to express one's observations.

Now set yourself an exercise or two. Suppose you had to criticize Keats's ballad *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. (Can't you hear somebody saying, "Oh, but you mustn't criticize one of the greatest poems in the language! You *can't* criticize Keats!" There it is once more. Let me repeat, criticism does *not* mean picking holes;—it means true and

full appreciation and the expression of your considered judgment. All the same, if Keats has a weakness, it is wrong—it is uncritical—to blind oneself to it just because he is Keats. One may place him—as many do—above all English poets, and yet confess that there is something infinitely nauseous in the constant swoonings of his young men—especially when they swoon for love.)

Now read this poem once more—*La Belle Dame sans Merci*. We cannot quote it all here, but let me remind you of the first verse :—

> " Oh, what can ail thee, Knight-at-Arms,
> Alone and palely loitering ?
> The sedge has withered from the lake,
> And no birds sing."

Read the whole poem presently, and then ask yourself these questions : What was the poet endeavouring to do when he wrote this poem ? Has he succeeded in doing it ? And if so, how is it done ? Ask yourself, too, what effect the poem has on you personally, and try hard to find out the cause of your admiration or dislike. Then write your thoughts down on paper.

Now the poem is a ballad ; yet it is unlike the old ballads of Robin Hood or Sir Patrick Spens. With a little thought it becomes apparent in what the difference lies : that whereas the old ballads are impersonal folk-poems, crude with the simple crudity of youth, this poem is most intensely personal, a finished work of art, a poem of intellectual and æsthetic *maturity*. The poem then is a ballad-poem—the work of a great artist ; and one has not much difficulty in finding out why Keats chose to write this poem in ballad form. (In this part of our criticism, you see, we are engaged with the question, What was the poet endeavouring to do ?) Now this is what he is doing. He is letting us in to that beautiful but unearthly region of Romance and Fancy

which lies so close to us—all round us—and yet, when we are no longer children, is so difficult to enter from the humdrum ways of everyday life. He takes us out of our world of experience altogether into a dream-world of spells and enchantment, of lovely witch-maidens holding in thrall pale Kings and Knights-at-Arms. *Now* it is evident why Keats chose the ballad form: because it is the form in which the Romance of a world of long ago may be most naturally and fittingly expressed. Has he succeeded in transporting us into this realm of romantic imagination? Well, you must read the poem—read it as poetically as you can—and then ask yourself that question. For me, there is no poem in the whole language which has more power to lift one on to that strange and lovely plane "where nothing is but what is not." And chiefly for that reason for me it is perfect poetry. But each must answer the question as his own feeling and instinct move him. If, then, Keats has achieved success in this wonderful way—and for some of us at least he has succeeded—how has he done it? What is the technique of such amazing art? Anyone can talk about Knights-at-Arms and spells and dreams, but not one in a million can write of them in a way that thrills one's inmost being. Perhaps it were a pity to pull so perfect a work of art to pieces to find out how it is made. We will not do that. Let me only suggest a point or two of perfect technique in this verse we have just quoted. You will find such exquisite art in every verse. "Alone and palely loitering"; do you feel the power of that half-mute 'e' in the word 'palely' in making the line 'loiter'? And do you hear the moaning, hollow sound in the word 'Alone' —which Coleridge uses in a similar way to give a sense of desolation?

> "The sedge has withered from the lake
> And no birds sing."

I know no other line, in any poem, which gives the sense of *deadness* which those three heavy stresses convey. "And no birds sing."

And so we might continue to think about this poem, appreciate it, analyse it, and set down our thoughts—and that would be true criticism. Our judgment might be wrong—through lack of sufficient experience, for instance, but for our own sake the criticism has been worth making.

Now let me quote another passage, and we will see what we can make of it :—

> "Contemporary with the incident
> Related in our opening paragraph
> Was that sad war 'twixt Gallia and ourselves
> That followed in the treaty signed at Troyes.
> And so Lieutenant-Colonel Jooles Dubosc
> Was sent by Charles of France against the lines
> Of our Sixth Henry (Fourteen-twenty-nine)
> To drive his legions out of Aquitaine."

Now what are we to make of this? Blank verse, of course; (Iambic pentameters, if you like). What was the author trying to do? To make two perfectly plain, straightforward statements in the form of blank verse. (Well, we will leave it at that for the moment.) Has he succeeded in doing so? Apparently he has. How did he do it? Why, by hitching a very dull piece of prose into verse-form by the simple expedient of making it scan exactly in iambics, five to the line. In fact it is not poetry at all, nor prose either for that matter, but just a horrid hybrid of versified-prose.

But that is not the end of the matter. There is something else about these lines—something that may turn out to be essential to our criticism. They are really funny, consciously and deliberately funny; and it takes a very clever man to write such bad verse as this so extraordinarily well. Having grasped this fact quite clearly, we will begin all over again and criticize the lines not as poetry, nor as prose,

but as a joke—part of an exquisitely funny verse-story by W. S. Gilbert.

Lastly, there is adverse criticism. And here it is better not to "damn with faint praise"—which has rightly been condemned as rather mean and shabby; it is better to be sure of one's facts, sure of oneself, and then strike hard and strike home. Read Macaulay's essay on Mr. Montgomery's poems—or at least the last lines beginning "Literature must be purified from this taint"—and you will realize what trenchant criticism can be. At the same time it is not an amiable essay; one feels that Macaulay is being unnecessarily cruel. It is easier to pull down than to set up; and adverse judgment is the least important of the critic's functions.

TWO POEMS REFERRED TO IN THIS CHAPTER

Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford

Come, gentlemen all, and listen awhile,
  And a story I'll to you unfold—
How Robin Hood served the Bishop
  When he robbed him of his gold.

As it fell in merry Barnsdale
  Under the greenwood tree,
The Bishop of Hereford was to come by,
  With all his companye.

"Come, kill a ven'son," said bold Robin Hood,
  "Come kill me a good fat deer.
The Bishop of Hereford is to dine with me to-day,
  And he shall pay well for his cheer.

"We'll kill a fat ven'son," said bold Robin Hood,
  "And dress it by the highway-side,
And we will watch the Bishop narrowly,
  Lest some other way he should ride."

He dressed himself up in shepherd's attire
With six of his men also,
And when the Bishop of Hereford came by
They about the fire did go.

"What matter is this?" said the Bishop,
"Or for whom do you make this ado?
Or why do you kill the King's ven'son,
When your company is so few?"

"We are shepherds," said bold Robin Hood,
"And we keep sheep all the year,
And we are disposed to be merry this day,
And to kill of the King's fat deer."

"You are brave fellowes," said the Bishop,
"And the King of your doings shall know;
Therefore make haste and come along with me,
For before the King you shall go."

"Oh, pardon, oh, pardon," said bold Robin Hood,
"Oh, pardon, I thee pray!
For it becomes not your lordship's coat
To take so many lives away."

"No pardon, no pardon," says the Bishop,
"No pardon I thee owe;
Therefore make haste and come along with me,
For before the King you shall go."

Robin set his back against a tree,
And his foot against a thorn,
And from underneath his shepherd's coat
He pull'd out a bugle horn.

He put the little end to his mouth,
And a loud blast did he blow,
Till three-score-and-ten of bold Robin's men
Come running all on a row;

All making obeysance to bold Robin Hood;
—'Twas a comely sight to see:
"What is the matter, master," said Little John,
"That you blow so hastilye?"—

" O here is the Bishop of Hereford,
And no pardon we shall have " :—
" Cut off his head, master," said Little John,
" And throw him into his grave."

" Oh, pardon, Oh, pardon," said the Bishop,
" Oh, pardon, I thee pray !
For if I had known it had been you,
I'd have gone some other way."

" No pardon, no pardon," said Robin Hood,
" No pardon I thee owe ;
Therefore make haste, and come along with me,
For to merry Barnsdale you shall go."

Then Robin he took the Bishop by the hand,
And led him to merry Barnsdale ;
He made him to stay and sup with him that night,
And to drink wine, beer, and ale.

" Call in the reckoning," said the Bishop,
" For methinks it grows wondrous high."
" Lend me your purse, Bishop," said Little John,
" And I'll tell you bye and bye."

Then Little John took the Bishop's cloak,
And spread it upon the ground,
And out of the Bishop's portmanteau
He told three hundred pound.

" So now let him go," said Robin Hood ;
Said Little John, " That may not be ;
For I vow and protest he shall sing us a mass,
Before that he go from me."

Robin Hood took the Bishop by the hand,
And bound him fast to a tree,
And made him sing a mass, God wot,
To him and his yeomandrye.

Then Robin Hood brought him through the wood
And caused the music to play,
And he made the Bishop to dance in his boots,
And they set him on his dapple-grey,
And they gave him the tail within his hand—
And glad he could so get away !

La Belle Dame sans Merci

"Oh, what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

"Oh, what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

"I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too."

"I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child.
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

"I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

"I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong she would bend, and sing
A faery's song.

"She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna-dew,
And sure, in language strange, she said,
'I love thee true.'

"She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore:
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

"And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill's side.

"I saw pale Kings and Princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

"I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

"And that is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing."

JOHN KEATS.

EXAMPLES

I

A Favourable Criticism (from Morison).

MACAULAY'S ESSAYS

Macaulay did for the historical Essay what Haydn did for the Sonata, and Watt for the Steam-engine; he found it rudimentary and unimportant, and left it complete and a thing of power.

To take a bright period or personage of history, to frame it in a firm outline, to conceive it at once in article-size, and then to fill in this limited canvas with sparkling anecdote, telling bits of colour, and facts, all fused together by a real genius for narrative, was the sort of genre-painting which Macaulay applied to history.

And to this day his essays remain the best of their class, not only in England but in Europe. . . . The best would adorn any literature, and even the less successful have a picturesque animation, and convey an impression of power that will not easily be matched. And, again, we need to bear in mind that they were the productions of a writer immersed in business, written in his scanty moments of leisure, when most men would have rested or sought recreation. Macaulay himself was most modest in his estimation of their value. It was the public that insisted on their re-issue, and few would be bold enough to deny that the public was right.

A Reply to Mr. Burke

(*Thomas Paine, 1737–1809: Rights of Man.*)

The method which Mr. Burke takes to prove that the people of England have no such rights, and that such rights do not now exist in the nation, either in whole or in part, or anywhere at all, is of the same marvellous and monstrous kind with what he has already said; for his arguments are that the persons, or the generation of persons, in whom they did exist, are dead, and with them the right is dead also. To prove this, he quotes a declaration made by Parliament about a hundred years ago, to William and Mary, in these words: "The Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, do, in the name of the people aforesaid" [meaning the people of England then living], "most humbly and faithfully *submit* themselves, their *heirs* and *posterities*, for ever." He also quotes a clause of another Act of Parliament made in the same reign, the terms of which, he says, "bind us" [meaning the people of that day], "our *heirs* and our *posterity*, to *them*, their *heirs* and *posterity*, to the end of time."

Mr. Burke conceives his point sufficiently established by producing those clauses, which he enforces by saying that they exclude the right of the nation for *ever*. And not yet content with making such declarations, repeated over and over again, he farther says, "that if the people of England possessed such a right before the Revolution" [which he acknowledges to have been the case, not only in England, but throughout Europe, at an early period], "yet that the *English nation* did, at the time of the Revolution, most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves, and for *all their posterity, for ever*."

As Mr. Burke occasionally applies the poison drawn from his horrid principles (if it is not profanation to call them by the name of principles) not only to the English nation, but to the French Revolution and the National Assembly, and charges that august, illuminated and illuminating body of men with the epithet of *usurpers*, I shall, *sans cérémonie*, place another system of principles in opposition to his.

The English Parliament of 1688 did a certain thing, which, for themselves and their constituents, they had a right to do, and which it appeared right should be done: but, in addition to this right, which they possessed by delegation, *they set up another right by assumption*, that of binding and controlling posterity to the end of time. The case, therefore, divides itself into two parts; the right which they possessed by delegation, and the right which they set up by assumption. The first is admitted; but with respect to the second, I reply:

There never did, there never will, and there never can, exist a Parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the "*end of time*," or of commanding for ever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it; and therefore all such

clauses, acts or declarations by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right nor the power to do, nor the power to execute, are in themselves null and void. Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself *in all cases* as the ages and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. The Parliament or the people of 1688, or of any other period, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or to control them *in any shape whatever*, than the Parliament or the people of the present day have to dispose of, bind or control those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organised, or how administered.

I am not contending for nor against any form of government, nor for nor against any party, here or elsewhere. That which a whole nation chooses to do, it has a right to do. Mr. Burke says, No. Where, then, does the right exist? I am contending for the rights of the *living*, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living. There was a time when kings disposed of their crowns by will upon their death-beds, and consigned the people, like beasts of the field, to whatever successor they appointed. This is now so exploded as scarcely to be remembered, and so monstrous as hardly

to be believed; but the Parliamentary clauses upon which Mr. Burke builds his political church are of the same nature.

The laws of every country must be analogous to some common principle. In England no parent or master, nor all the authority of Parliament, omnipotent as it has called itself, can bind or control the personal freedom even of an individual beyond the age of twenty-one years. On what ground of right, then, could the Parliament of 1688, or any other Parliament, bind all posterity for ever?

Those who have quitted the world, and those who are not yet arrived at it, are as remote from each other as the utmost stretch of mortal imagination can conceive. What possible obligation, then, can exist between them; what rule or principle can be laid down that of two non-entities, the one out of existence and the other not in, and who never can meet in this world, the one should control the other to the end of time?

In England it is said that money cannot be taken out of the pockets of the people without their consent. But who authorized, or who could authorize, the Parliament of 1688 to control and take away the freedom of posterity (who were not in existence to give or to withhold their consent), and limit and confine their right of acting in certain cases for ever?

A greater absurdity cannot present itself to the understanding of man than what Mr. Burke offers to his readers. He tells them, and he tells the world to come, that a certain body of men who existed a hundred years ago, made a law, and that there does not now exist in the nation, nor ever will, nor ever can, a power to alter it. Under how many subtilties or absurdities has the divine right to govern been imposed on the credulity of mankind! Mr. Burke has discovered a new one, and he has shortened his journey to

Rome by appealing to the power of this infallible Parliament of former days; and he produces what it has done as of divine authority, for that power must certainly be more than human which no human power to the end of time can alter.

CHAPTER XII
On Writing Plays

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The writing of plays for the theatre is a highly technical matter, needing years of study and a very special experience. Shakespeare himself was better known in his own early days as an actor and later as an actor-manager than as a playwright, and without this special experience his plays could never have been the stupendous works they are. To offer a few hints on the writing of such plays in a little chapter of some 2,000 words would be simply silly—perhaps impertinent. The books which undertake to make you "a finished pianist in twelve lessons without a master" are foolish enough; but what of the complete playwright in *one?*

The writing of little household comedies to be done at Christmas—little plays to be acted by boys and girls at school, is a different matter altogether. One is justified in writing such plays without any special experience at all beyond that of the village stage or the school theatre, partly from the immense pleasure they give to the actors—one hopes even to the audience—partly because they afford very excellent practice in the writing of English. For the making of such little plays one has no compunction in offering suggestions based on one's own experience.

Now first of all bear this in mind: whatever you decide to write about, whatever your plot and your setting, the little play will fail if your characters are not sufficiently differentiated. All your characters must think their own thoughts, and live their own lives in their own way—not your way; they must all be distinct personalities—not just

yourself dressed up in their clothes. It is their minds you must get inside, not their coats. An actor has to lose himself in his part; a playwright must lose himself in *all* the parts.

I recall the story of an actor—I cannot remember who it was—who so far lost himself in his part that he never found himself again. It was the climax of the play. He was in prison, standing on a stool in his cell, sawing through the bars. One more bar had to be sawn through before escape was possible; but the jailers were coming to fetch him—they were already at the door. As they enter the man leaps from the stool, seizes a little bottle of poison which has been smuggled into his cell, gulps it down and dies at their feet. One night, as he leapt for his poison, he found to his horror that the property-man had forgotten the little bottle! What was to be done? He would never be taken alive; and looking wildly round his eye caught the great file with which he had been endeavouring to saw through the bar. He seized it, jammed it down his throat, and actually died. The audience applauded a very realistic-death scene.

This was, of course, a sacrifice to Art which not many of us would feel justified in making. All the same the story serves to illustrate my point—that the actor must lose himself in his character, the playwright in each part he writes, or the result will be true neither to life nor to art.

Shakespeare put himself into the place of his own characters with such consummate skill and insight that one never sees Shakespeare through any personality in the plays; whereas it is possible to say in reading many of our modern plays, "Isn't this a typical 'So-and-So's' character?" That is a sign of weakness. Bearing this first essential in mind all the time, we can now begin our play.

First the Plot. Some people have plot-minds; they select a group of characters suited to the needs of the school or family for whom the little play is being written, and forth-

with a plot appears. Blessed are they that are in such a case. To others, plot-making is hard labour. Do not give up your play because you cannot think of a plot—take one already half-baked, as Shakespeare used to do: an old ballad such as *Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford*, a dramatic scene from history such as the escape of Lord Nithsdale, and on that strong framework build up your play. But whether you make your own plot or take one ready-made as a literary 'reach-me-down,' you must remember that the interest of a good play does not really lie so much in the actual events as in what is happening in the minds of the characters. The real tragedy of *Macbeth* is not the murder of Duncan, but Macbeth's moral downfall; and the chief interest of the play is Macbeth's mental conflict. That is the essential difference between drama and cheap melodrama: the one is a psychological feast, the other a twenty-course, spectacular orgie.

Again, whether your play is tragic or comic, aim at depicting a reversal of fortune: that is, if your plot is sad or tragic, things will be going all right till some kink in the hero's mind, some obsession, throws life out of the normal, and then things go all wrong. This is what happens in Shakespeare's tragedies. If your play is adventurous, things will be going all wrong; they grow worse and worse, till a deed of heroism on the part of the hero or the heroine—or if he has to be killed, somebody who doesn't so much matter—tips the balance again and all goes well. Such a play is *The Green Goddess*.

In your little comedy, apart from the humour of the dialogue, much will depend on the development of the *unexpected*, or the *incongruous;* and all must turn out right in the end.

Again, your plot may depend on the hero having the moral courage to change his mind; or upon the clash of two strong characters neither of whom will give way—as in

Galsworthy's *Strife;* but these are really only special examples of our first form of plot. The great thing is to work through the minds of your characters; do not leave much to chance and coincidence.

Next as to scene and setting. In amateur theatricals the interior scene is very much easier to manage than the exterior—Lady Somebody's drawing-room is much simpler to contrive than the Italian garden; while the "Shore of a Desert Island" may cause panic among the scene-painters. But whatever your scene, be sure you think it out most thoroughly with relation to plot and character, and then describe it briefly, vividly, and with meticulous accuracy. In our time, descriptions of scenes no longer consist of three or four words—"Before the Inn," or "Another Part of the Field." It is felt rather that the author of the play should control and dominate the setting. Hence the long and wonderfully vivid descriptions at the beginning of scenes in the plays of Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy. Indeed, in one famous scene in *Justice* by the latter playwright (the scene in Falder's cell) not one word is spoken from beginning to end. Such condensed and vivid description requires real vision and not a little art.

Next the dialogue. First let me repeat that all your characters must differ from one another. If they are all different versions of *yourself* the little play will be flat and lifeless. And let your conversation be pointed and apt, not rambling or boring, except where you mean it to be.

Mrs. Nickleby and General Bonsor are delightful because they *are* rambling or boring—so that even with those characters the conversation *is* pointed and apt. Ordinary dialogue must be 'cleverer'—more terse, more condensed, than the slip-shod and discursive talk of everyday life. After all, your play is very definitely a crowded hour. Time is telescoped; and things happening in headlong sequence must be made to appear normal; and just as one is not worried

by gaps of hours, days—even years—between the scenes, one will not miss the normal padding, the stuffing of ineptitudes, which fill out the average real-life conversation. The long speech, so marvellously powerful and effective in a long play such as *Strife* (where it really is a speech), though sometimes very telling in the middle of dialogue—as in *Fanny's First Play*—is usually out of place in the sort of play which we imagine ourselves to be writing: it upsets the balance. There should be plenty of give and take, and a comfortable division of parts if your play is not to appear lopsided. It is *possible* to give nearly all the talk to one character even in a little play—for Galsworthy has done it in *The Little Man*—where the delightful American traveller hardly stops talking all the way through, while the Englishman and his wife converse in monosyllables, and the Dutch boy merely laughs. But such an achievement requires skill of a very high order.

If you would realize how important it is to 'get into' your play, to tell the audience all that it is necessary for them to know without letting them realize that they are being told, turn to your Shakespeare and see how skilfully he does it. None of your clumsy preliminary talks between the housemaid and the butler, but a bleeding sergeant straight from the battlefield, or a poor ghost back at midnight from the confines of Hell, to tell you all you need to know. Get into your plot with all the skill you may, develop the theme, and so grow to a point, and when your crisis is passed, conclude with quiet precision; do not stop up the end with a lump of platitude. Take infinite pains over the end of your last scene, the talk at the final situation, for in fixing an impression of the whole play, the final talk—even the rhythm of the final words—has a most powerful influence. That is surely as it should be; and it is not confined to drama: read the last lines of *Lycidas*, or the end of the Bible.

PASSAGES REFERRED TO

I

Last lines of Lycidas :—

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey :
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay ;
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropped into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

II

Examples of Mrs. Nickleby's Rambling Talk.

" Well, I never saw such people in all my life for time as you are, up here ! I declare I never did ! I had not the least idea that Nicholas was after his time, not the smallest. Mr. Nickleby used to say—your poor papa, I am speaking of, Kate my dear—used to say that appetite was the best clock in the world, but you have no appetite, my dear Miss Bray, I wish you had, and upon my word I really think you ought to take something that would give you one. I am sure I don't know, but I have heard that two or three dozen native lobsters give an appetite, though that comes to the same thing after all, for I suppose you must have an appetite before you can take 'em. If I said lobsters, I meant oysters, it's all the same. Though really how you came to know about Nicholas——"

" We happened to be just talking about him, mamma, that was it."

" You never seem to me to be talking about anything else, Kate, and upon my word I am quite surprized at your being so thoughtless. You can find subjects enough to talk about sometimes, and when you know how important it is to keep up Miss Bray's spirits, and interest her, and all that, it really is quite extraordinary to me what can induce you to keep on prose, prose, prose, din, din, din, everlastingly, upon the same theme. You are a very kind nurse, Kate, and a very good one, and I know you mean very well ; but I will say this—that if it wasn't for me, I really don't know what would become of Miss Bray's spirits, and so I tell the Doctor every day. He says he

wonders how I sustain my own, and I am sure I very often wonder myself how I can contrive to keep up as I do. Of course it's an exertion, but still, when I know how much depends upon me in this house, I am obliged to make it. There's nothing praiseworthy in that, but it's necessary, and I do it."

Mrs. Nickleby on Smike's Unaccountable Conduct.

"I hope that this unaccountable conduct may not be the beginning of his taking to his bed and living there all his life, like the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury, or the Cock-lane Ghost, or one of those extraordinary creatures. One of them had some connection with our family. I forget, without looking back to some old letters I have upstairs, whether it was my great-grandfather who went to school with the Cock-lane Ghost, or the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury who went to school with my grandmother. Miss La Creevy, you know, of course. Which was it that didn't mind what the clergyman said? The Cock-lane Ghost, or the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury?"

"The Cock-lane Ghost, I believe."

"Then I have no doubt that it was with him my great-grandfather went to school; for I know the master of his school was a dissenter, and that would, in a great measure, account for the Cock-lane Ghost's behaving in such an improper manner to the clergyman when he grew up. Ah! Train up a Ghost—child, I mean——"

LITTLE STUDIES OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

LITTLE STUDIES OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

I

Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Prose.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling, as everybody knows, was educated with Stalky and Co. at Westward Ho, and began his literary career out in India as assistant editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette* and the *Pioneer*. Add the fact that Mr. Kipling has been a traveller in many lands, and has sailed all over the seven seas, and that is all we can spare for biography.

Now if I were asked what were the real achievements of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, I should say these three things: First he discovered India, and revealed it so vividly that the Londoner may feel he knows his India at last—not Mrs. Hawksbee's India,—I do not mean that, but the India of *Kim*, and *Mowgli*, and *Namgay Doolah*, and *Moti Guj*. No one has ever painted India for the average man so directly and intimately as Kipling: he touches the little things that matter with a strength and directness which have never been equalled. The smell of the Himalayas which is "The scent of damp wood-smoke, hot cakes, dripping undergrowth, and rotting pine cones," the intense and overpowering heat of the City of Dreadful Night, and again in those wonderful opening paragraphs of the story *At the End of the Passage*, where the four Englishmen, dressed in the thinnest of sleeping-suits, are playing whist fretfully in the half-dark—the talk, the colour, the crowds, the smells, the whole wild atmosphere of jungle life—all these intimate things he showed us for the first time, and took our imagination by storm. "This is India, this is your inheritance!"

he told us. I do not think it is sympathy so much that has given him the power to paint India for us with such vivid directness. Mrs. Steel's India is based on sympathetic insight, but Kipling's upon a perfectly amazing power of observation. Wherever he turns his searchlight look, the essential things stand out clear-cut and unforgettable. Whether he fixes them by a word, as this—"The witchery of the moonlight was everywhere," or the "little squab shadows of the pigeons," or a phrase—"all black and shining"—of Moti Guj the elephant, after his bath, or a long description, such as that of the Kingdom, at the beginning of *Namgay Doola*—his extraordinary graphic power vitalizes them for ever.

Kipling's second achievement was the discovery of the British soldier, the typical Tommy Atkins. Nowadays we all know—or think we know—the character and mentality of the soldier—his grumbling courage, his infinite resource, his most baffling sense of humour, which no privation or horror can kill—(who but the English would have thought of singing back at the Germans their own Hymn of Hate?)—his weaknesses, his narrow but most disturbing and humorous code of honour.

But in the 'nineties that was not so. "It was Tommy this, and Tommy that, and Tommy go away," and few had the chance of appreciating his qualities till Kipling made him articulate in the persons of his *Soldiers Three*—Orthoris, the perky, terrier-like little Cockney; Learoyd, the heavy Yorkshireman; and that inimitable Irishman, Private Mulvaney. In that remarkable but utterly typical trio, the whole British Army—the little long-service army of pre-war days—came to life and won our hearts.

It is in these soldier-stories, I think, such as *My Lord the Elephant*, or *The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney*, that the Kipling humour is at its best, and that for two reasons. First, a master of words such as Kipling has here full scope

for the particular humour that depends upon choice of words and names and phrases—such as Mulvaney's inimitable epithets. Secondly, the humour of the soldier stories is broad—broad as the hind-quarters of my lord the Elephant who stuck in the Pass—and with these stories broad humour is entirely in keeping and really funny. But away from the soldiers I confess that the 'funny' stories do not make me smile. *The Village that Voted* and much of *Stalky & Co.* affect me like a deafening, raucous laugh; and *Brugglesmith* and *My Sunday at Home* are passed over with something of disgust. At least for my part I see little humour in drunkenness, still less in being beastly sick. The fun in the Soldier stories is real humour, and entirely in keeping.

But Mr. Kipling's greatest achievement is this: that he made the English short story. There were short stories before his day, of course, written by such masters as Dickens himself; but one always feels that they are short long-stories, if one may use the phrase. Compression, directness, rapidity, which are the soul of the great short story, were discovered by Kipling, and he is marvellous in his art. Even his faults of style become virtues; for the almost studied roughness, the 'thrust' and jerkiness that so often jar and rattle through the longer tales, are not felt here.

In the short story one *must* be rapid and direct; for there is no time for explanations or the unfolding of characters—except in so far as they unfold themselves. Kipling's stories are not rough. Moreover there is in many of them a subtle tenderness of thought and expression that will bring a lump to one's throat and leave one with a sense that one has been brought near to the heart of things. Such a story is *The Drums of the Fore and Aft.* I do not believe any other writer in the world could have composed that story without becoming sloppy and sentimental. Hard blows, rough speech, and canteen rum put an edge on to the sentiment, and the result is a story of extraordinary pathos and supreme primitive

heroism. That is always so in Kipling's tales about children—without attempting to hide from view the great love he bears them, he is never mawkish, not for one moment. The story of *Wee Willie Winkie* touches the heart with its boyish courage. *Baa-baa-black-sheep*—the story of an Anglo-Indian child left behind with people who do not understand—is poignantly sad; but the manly strength of these children's tales never sags down to sentiment.

For my own part, I consider him to be at his very greatest in the 'straight-line' story—the story which proceeds logically, rapidly, with intense cumulative effect, to the inevitable climax, with sometimes a most telling drop to a quiet anticlimax at the end. Such a 'straight-line' story is *The Man Who Was*, in which a supposed Afghan carbine-thief is brought into the Officers' Mess of the White Hussars, where, step by step, in logical sequence and with dramatic power unsurpassed in story, he is proved to be Lieutenant Limmason, exiled to Siberia after the Crimean War. This I really believe is the greatest story of its kind ever written. Another perfect 'straight-line' story is *The Man who would be King*. There is something Marlowe-like in this tragedy of ambition. We meet the two men going up country on their tremendous quest. There is a pause—and then one of them returns, so disfigured by torture that he is unrecognizable save by the broad black band of eyebrow. Then the disjointed history of success beyond all dreams—the brief absolute power, the failure and end of the man who would be King, more a King than ever in his tremendous death. It is a story within a story, but its logical line is unbroken, and its dramatic power leaves one amazed.

Mr. Kipling has many other sources of power at his command. Not the least of them is his genius for placing strange Eastern beliefs in a Western setting. He blends the earthly with the devilish, the super-mundane with the matter-of-fact, and makes the impossible possible. Such a

atory, terrific in its power, is *The Mark of the Beast*, in which the horrible, slab-faced silver man contrives to substitute for a young man's soul the soul of a wolf. It is all so terribly real that one says to oneself aghast, "Surely it can't be true!" Or there is *The End of the Passage*, already referred to. The lonely man dies of sheer horror; and the doctor photographs the dead man's eyes. But we never know what he saw on the negative, for he smashes the plate, and rushes from the darkroom, gasping, "It's not possible." Then there are strange and beautiful dream-stories such as *The Brushwood Boy;* and, more unearthly than all, the story called *They*, in which the blind lady's intense love of little children materializes the ghost children who live and play in her house. It is this blind lady who traces with her finger the form of the 'Egg itself'—the human aura or emanence which the people of the East believe glows round each man in the form of an Egg, expressing in luminous colour his character and mood for those who have eyes to see. Briefly, then, the secret of Mr. Kipling's use of the supernatural is that he makes it appear natural.

Next there are the animal stories in the *Jungle Books*, *The Maltese Cat*, and above all *Rikki-tikki-Tavy*, which to my mind is a perfect little idyll, more delicate, humorous, and touching than any other animal story I have ever read. How is it that these animal stories are so convincing and true? Surely the secret is just this, that the characters think beast-thoughts, not human thoughts; that the human speech in which their talk is set is accepted by us at once as a true interpretation of animal thought and expression.

Although Baloo is Mowgli's tutor he is always a very bear; Bagheera is always panther, never human; Kaa the python is terrible in his snakish power, but he never leaves his python-thoughts for ours.

The strangest—though by no means the greatest—of his stories are those in which locomotive engines and great

liners are endowed with human thought and speech and really live in our imagination. A story such as *The Ship that Found Herself*, told in a jargon of mechanical technicalities, is an astonishingly skilful achievement; but it is in the nature of a *tour de force*, and cannot, I think, be compared with the great short stories. The long stories are undoubtedly less successful, for they are marred by a certain jerkiness and a lack of restraint, which the compression and rapidity of the short story have quite eliminated.

One cannot leave the briefest sketch of Mr. Kipling's prose without noting his extraordinary power of bringing the past to life. It is not so much that he puts us back into an unfamiliar past, as that he makes the men of ancient days live again for us in the same England that we know and love to-day. The Romans in England—such a little while ago really; and yet they seemed so impossibly remote till Kipling wrote *The Great Wall* and *The Winged Hats*. Even the men of Elizabeth's day seem to belong to another world—though they are only our great-grandfathers' great-grandfathers. But we meet them naturally and simply in the story of *Simple Simon*. So much—for a brief sketch—for Mr. Kipling's Prose.

II

Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Verse.

When I was at school I read and re-read every line of verse that Mr. Kipling had then written; many of the poems I had—and still have—by heart; so had we all; and without *Mandalay* or *The Young British Soldier*, no camp-fire sing-song was complete. Years have passed since then; and now in this last fortnight, with a maturer judgment, I have read all the Kipling poems once more. And very strange it is to read oneself back into the aggressive Imperialism of Boer-war days—to recall that wonderful self-

complacency—(" Doubt not but ye are the people—absolute, strong and wise ") ; to worship once more—in memory only—at the shrine of the war-god :

" Jehovah of the Thunders,
Lord God of Battles, hear ! "

" With a maturer judgment," I said : and as I shut the book I felt that there had been a complete readjusting of values. It is the songs that shout the loudest which now carry the least distance ; the message that thundered in the 'nineties sounds like tin stage-thunder to-day. All those strong topical poems that swept us off our feet, as boys, in a torrent of blatant patriotism and a fervour of discipline-worship have just trickled away. And what is left ? Why, something much greater than before. For it is the true poetry—lovely, unassuming things that used to be crowded out like violets in a teeming hedge-row, poems with a timeless message, not a boisterous temporary appeal—that have at last come into their own for our delight. These, and certain very noble and manly poems which for their nobility and this same *timeless* appeal have never lost favour in thirty years—these are the Kipling poems that will live.

The poems are far too many to be discussed chronologically ; but one may talk of them briefly in groups or types ; and we will start with the Ballad. Of this there is no doubt at all that Mr. Kipling has loved the English and the Border ballad ; he has soaked himself in the ballad, as it were, as Coleridge and many another poet did before him, and you constantly feel this ballad atmosphere coming through even when there is no conscious imitation. In such little poems as *Brookland Road* you sense it strongly :

" Old Goodman's farm is rank seaweed
And was this thousand year ;
But it shall turn to rich ploughland
Before I change my dear."

But ballad is true folk song—crude and childlike and entirely impersonal—thoughts of the childhood of a whole race, put without conscious art into poetical form; and in this very artlessness lies half the charm. No writer of later days has ever succeeded in writing true ballad—not Coleridge, not even Scott himself; for the personality of the author cannot be hidden—and true ballad is impersonal. And realizing this, Mr. Kipling, I feel, has reached an entirely satisfactory compromise. There is no deliberate attempt to reproduce the ballad form and atmosphere exactly, for that would be an anachronism even were it possible; nor is there any disguising of the author's personality and style. It is just a frank use of ballad form and atmosphere in a modern world in which the romance of ballad days has not really gone—for those who have eyes to see. It is not of the barrack-room ballad that I am speaking, for though you sense that subtle ballad flavour at times, as in :—

> " Where have you been this while away,
> Johnnie, Johnnie ? "
> Out with the rest on a picnic lay,
> Johnnie, Johnnie, aha ! "

the majority of them have little in keeping with true folk-verse. The two great ballad-poems I have in mind are *The Ballad of East and West* and *The Rhyme of the Three Sealers*.

The Ballad of East and West is probably the best-known poem Mr. Kipling ever wrote. The first four lines—the first line especially—have become as familiar and proverbial as characters from Dickens or ' quotations ' from *Hamlet*. " Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. . .," who does not know them ? The two strong men who stand face to face are Kamal the Border thief, who has stolen the Colonel's mare, and the Colonel's son, who rides alone to win her back. There are two reasons,

I think, for the great popularity of the poem: the first is that it is a very *noble* poem. The thrill of manhood—of glorious youth—vivifies the poem, so that one may say of it, as Sir Philip Sidney did of *Chevy Chase*, "Whenever I read it I feel my heart stirred more than as with a trumpet." Yet there is nothing aggressive nor forced about this brave expression of manhood. One never feels that the author is saying, as Bottom the Weaver says of his own performance: "This was lofty!" The other reason is that it is a splendid story told in splendid verse. As a short story in prose the great adventure and its sequel would have held us enthralled. In verse of such strength and vigour it is irresistible. And note this, that while the verse shows ballad influence very strongly, the style is none the less personal for that. It is a happy compromise, from a line like this on the ballad side:—

"The little jackals that flee so fast were feeding all in a row,"

to this in more personal style:—

"Last night ye had struck at a Border thief—to-night 'tis a man of the Guides!"

The other great ballad is *The Rhyme of the Three Sealers*. The theme is not so lofty: Three seal-poachers try to steal the seal-skins from each other; two of them fight it out till both captains and many of the crews are dead. Nor is it so perfectly balanced in theme or structure. It is true, too, that it often lends itself to parody—and Punch did not spare it ("when the great man-bloaters snorted low. . . .!") Yet for all that I believe it is in some respects a greater poem. There is something vast and elemental about this poem. A cold world of drear headlands and ice and lonely seas, where lawless men grope their way from fog to fog—a colossal, Blake-like setting—and under this rolling and enormous fog, *man* in his pettiness and deceit, and his unconquerable

courage. An elemental silence, broken only by the creak of the boom, the clank of the mooring chain, the little angry voices of men, the sharp sounds of the hidden fight—and then silence again. For sheer poetry there is nothing, I think, in *The Ballad of East and West* to touch those Fog passages, or the description of the two ships lying side by side after the fight—the lawlessness, the futile courage.

The barrack-room ballads are told in soldier dialect of conscious and deliberate roughness, and deal for the most part with rough themes. *Danny Deever*—which tells of the hanging of a soldier—is a poem of intense dramatic force, and is probably the greatest; and great too are those ballads which show the strength of manly comradeship, such as *Ford o' Kabul River*, or display in rugged soldier-language a sense and appreciation of beauty—as in *Mandalay*, and *For to Admire*. The barrack-room fragments sometimes 'go' with an astonishing lilt and rhythm. One is almost jolted off one's feet by this:

"Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back at once,
For the bullocks are walking two by two,
The *byles* are walking two by two,
And the elephants bring the guns.
Ho! Yuss!
Great—big—long—black—forty-pounder guns.
Jiggery-jolty, to and fro,
Each as big as a launch in tow,
Blind—dumb—broad-breeched beggars o' battery-guns.

Closely allied to the barrack-room ballads are the long dramatic monologues, such as *The Mary Gloster*, but of these we have no time to speak; and that strange poem, *The Last Chanty*, with its grand structure and fierce power of diction: "Thus said the Lord in the Vault above the Cherubim. . . ." Certain poems, too, such as *Anchor Song*, so full of sea-terms that it is unintelligible to the landsman—but for that very reason brings with it the savour of

the sea, or at least of ships and seamen; for one feels that whenever Kipling writes of the sea—which is often, and in marvellous manner—it is man in his relation to the sea of which he is really speaking.

In certain poems Mr. Kipling deliberately strikes a moral note. There is *If*, beloved by boys for its simple, manly deals and its entire lack of softness or sentimentality. It seems to look one straight in the eyes and say, "This is what an Englishman should do." The prayer beginning:

> "Father of heaven whose love profound
> A ransom for my soul hath found,"

has the same appeal for its virility, its delight in simple things, and its realization that the use of strength is to help weakness. And then the *Recessional*—with its moving refrain "Lest we forget"—a poem held by many to be the truest and most beautiful thing Kipling ever wrote. And so in a sense it must be; and it comes with a strange and touching humility after the ranting patriotism of earlier songs. There is no doubt about its being great poetry (who but Mr. Kipling could include the whole Empire in one little phrase—"dominion over palm and pine"?), and yet—and this may seem strange to some—there is no poem which has exasperated the foreigner more than the *Recessional* with what appears to him its smug self-complacency—its calm assumption of Divine choice and favour. What is true sincerity to us seems humbug to the foreigner—and it is a point worth remembering.

And now we come to what I believe to be immeasurably the greatest of all the Kipling poems—the quiet poems of England. He has brandished and flaunted the Flag all over the Seven Seas—but he comes back at last to the Weald of Sussex, English Wild Flowers, and the Shadows on the Downs:—

> " See you our little mill that clacks
> So busy by the brook ?
> She has ground her corn and paid her tax
> Ever since Domesday Book,"

and at once we are upon a higher plane of poetry. The thunder of the Captains and the shouting sound feeble and silly ; and beside this intimate love of England—the England of *Puck's Song* and *The Way through the Woods* "—the loud, bombastic song of Empire leaves us smiling with something very like pity. Those two poems are, I believe, the greatest poems by far that Mr. Kipling ever wrote. The *Flowers* (" Buy my English posies ") is a beautiful song ; and so is *Sussex ;* but for true poetic feeling, insight, and expression, I cannot believe there is anything more lovely in all this great volume of collected verse than this simple poem from *Puck of Pook's Hill.*

III

Mr. John Masefield's Sea-Poetry.

It is a strange thing that we, an island people with a mighty empire beyond seas, a race whose greatest achievement is the result of a thousand years of sea-toil and sea-power, should yet possess so scant a sea literature. Indeed it is very nearly true to say that until our own generation there is no sea literature at all. It is difficult to imagine that Englishmen of old time had an outlook very different from our own. They must have felt the fascination of the sea—its awful power, its relentless cruelty, its bewitching charm ; but if they did they were inarticulate.

One looks for the sea in old literature—and this is what one finds : rough, bawling seamen, bo'suns, mariners, ship's boys, " ranting and roaring like true British sailors "—from Chaucer's shipman from " Dertemouth," and even before him, through Shakespeare, and Fielding, and Smollett,

and Michael Scott, and Marryat, right on to our own day. The essential conditions of sea life are unalterable; and so the type persists. Shakespeare's Bo'sun roars to this day; and I have known Hawser Trunnions among our modern Admirals. There is much about the discomfort of sea-voyages—seasickness among the passengers, such as pilgrims bound for Compostella in Spain; bad food and conditions, as in Smollett's *Roderick Random;* pirates innumerable, from *Hamlet* to Charles Reade; perils and shipwrecks, from Sir Patrick Spens to Falconer; and battles from the song of the sea fight off Sluys to the innumerable ballads and poems written upon the Battle of Trafalgar. But for the fearful love and awed understanding of the sea itself—if we except a certain majesty of storm-description by Byron and Dickens and a few more—we have to wait literally till our own generation. Swinburne understood, and the sea and the wind swing through his verse. But far and away the greatest sea-writers in the language are these three: Melville, who wrote *Moby Dick* in 1852, Joseph Conrad, and John Masefield, whose sea-work we are going to discuss.

Mr. Masefield knows the sea, as a seaman and as a poet. Every mood and aspect of the sea is known to him—the glory of it, the great wonder of its ceaseless change, its terrific and unthinking cruelty that seems so much like conscious tyranny; calm, and storm, and snow, and fog, and ice; the hard, dangerous life of sailor-men, and the Ship, the most nearly living thing that man has made—he knows it all, for he himself has been a sailor, and one with no common insight and artistic power.

The first book of Mr. Masefield's sea-poems appeared in 1902. With all their great force and careful artistry these *Salt-water Ballads* are immature. They show very unmistakably the influence of Kipling in his 'barrack' style; but whereas Kipling tells in soldier language of the crude but by no means savage life of the barrack-room and the parade

ground, Masefield tells of the tragedy and savagery of the fo'c'sle seaman's life with a realism that at times overreaches itself. Such deliberate crudity as this, for instance :

" Josey slipped from the tops'l-yard and bust his bloody back,"

or this :—

" And then we shovelled him up in a sack and dumped him to the fish " ;

or this, when the women are making ready for their husbands' return :—

" And the bloody fun of it is, they're drowned ! "

—these things, with all their forceful directness, and far more studied choice of word and stress than the reader who is carried off his feet would imagine, somehow overreach themselves by a too-conscious strain to express the grimmest tragedy. It is a shallow plunge into horror for all its splash ; not till after many more years of experience was the poet to dive deep into true elemental tragedy.

There are beautiful things as well as strong things in these first poems : *Sea Fever*, with its vision and its longing— " I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky " ; *The West Wind*, with a hint of the magic of Yeats— " It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries." And now and then one is almost startled to find in brief a hint of greatness to come. This is the third verse of *Sing a Song o' Shipwreck* :—

" All day long in the calm she had rolled to the swell,
Rolling through fifty degrees till she clattered her bell ;
'N' then came snow, 'n' a squall, 'n' the wind was colder 'n hell."

Read that, and then turn to the marvellous fourth canto of *Dauber*, and you will find it written again with a master-pen ; here are a few lines :—

"All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves. . . ."

And this again :—

"The Polar snow came down little and light
Till all the sky was hidden by the small
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white,
Tumbling and wavering down and covering all. . . ."

It is the same thing, but the second is the outcome of profound experience. We shall have much more to say about *Dauber* presently.

We turn to *Ballads and Poems*—his next collection—and at once we leave the ocean-tramp fo'c'sle, the vigorous horror, the super-Kiplingese, for poems most lovely and tender, full of haunting images, and constructed with an art that depends upon extreme delicacy of ear. Here is *Cargoes* —three tiny but most memorable pictures: the "Quinquereme," the "Spanish Galleon," and the "Dirty British Coaster." Here is *Spanish Waters* and "the land surf of Los Muertos which is beating in my ears." Here is that old song re-sung :—

"I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing
With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in her hold. . . ."

But with all their beauty one feels that these poems are not yet the true Masefield, free and uninfluenced. One reads the poem called *Beauty* beginning :—

"I have seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills
Coming in solemn beauty like those old times of Spain. . . ."

Or *Twilight* :—

Twilight it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks cry and call.
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all."

Very lovely and entrancing those poems are; and yet

somehow they are reminiscent. There is magic in the words —but surely the spell has been on us before, and with still greater power? And then verses slip into one's mind; lines such as these :—

> "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin built there, of clay and wattles made. . . ."

Irish Magic! Magic the most bewitching, the most enthralling of all, perhaps. Mr. Masefield can cast a spell, too, there is no doubt about that; but here it is Yeats, and there it is Synge, and it is never *quite* his own—not yet.

And then quite suddenly Mr. Masefield struck out, and the world, as it were, saw stars. I remember nothing in literature more startling and sudden than the effect of the publication of *The Everlasting Mercy*. It was not a matter of a new planet swimming into our ken: it had already swum. It was as though a minor star suddenly blazed up into one of the first magnitude. For here was life and individuality, and power, and soul-shaking experience; and the literary world shouted with excitement. We cannot discuss *The Everlasting Mercy* here, for the *sea* is our subject; but it is important to note that the intense individual greatness of Mr. Masefield dates from this time. Next came the *Widow in the Bye Street*, and after that *Dauber*.

I suppose most of us can remember the scene and the occasion on which we first 'discovered' great poems—our first reading of Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, or Spenser's *Epithalamion*, or Henley's "A late lark twitters from the quiet skies." I shall not forget that station bookstall where I saw the copy of the *English Review* with the announcement of John Masefield's *Dauber* on the cover. I still read *Dauber* in that old blue-paper covered magazine, to recapture something of the thrill of that first reading. Was ever such a sea-poem written? There have been inimitable isolated sea phrases all through literature from Aeschylus' *Anarith-*

mon Gelasma Oceanoio—that marvellous phrase which has shone and twinkled through the centuries,—(the best we can do with it is "The many-twinkling smile of ocean"—which, of course, conveys no idea of the original),—but here in this great poem is verse after verse, page upon page, of the most glorious sea-painting in the language. The wonder of it chokes one's breath—like the Cape Horn gale itself.

In form, and sometimes in matter, the poem *Dauber* is not perfect. But the imperfections are plain to see, and we need not emphasize them here.

> "Four bells were struck, the watch were called on deck."

We find ourselves among the crew of an ocean-going tramp, a rough, unthinking crowd, but human and not unlikeable, very different from the low, callous ruffians of the *Salt-water Ballads*. And then the Dauber—

> ". . . tall, a slight-built man,
> Young for his years and not yet twenty-two,
> Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan."

He is an artist. He longs to paint the sea and ships with inside knowledge—all the colour and lights and movements that no one had ever set down fully before. His rough mates worry and bully him, not cruelly, but unthinkingly, as boys tease. They find his pictures and rub them all off the canvas with turpentine—to see how he will take it; and they are full of crude delight when he complains to the Captain and gets 'scrubbed' for his pains. Weeks pass, and the ship carries on towards Cape Horn with the Trades; "Southwards she thundered while the westers held." At last they neared the Cape, and the ship rolled, "Rolled till she clanged, rolled till the brain was tired."

> "'Lock up your paints,' the mate said, speaking light,
> 'This is the Horn; you'll join my watch to-night.'"

Canto IV.—and now comes the stupendous achievement of the poem. There is nothing—and I say it in all confidence—nothing in literature to equal the description of this windless night when "startles of water made the swing-ports gush, The sea was moaning and sighing and saying 'Hush'!" The enormous fog—"like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red"; the sound of the whales, "Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech." The day half breaking through fog banks; "the sea-fowl, scattering, Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering, chattering." The Polar snow—"coming on no known air, but drifting past."

"Then came the cry of 'Call all hands on deck!"—"The fairleads skirled: And from the south-west came the end of the world." The storm that follows is the greatest storm in all literature. It cannot well be quoted in little bits. There is an overpowering force in it, an elemental fury that batters and deafens the mind, stunning the imagination, and leaving one full of pity and great wonder that man can endure so much, and come through triumphantly. For thirty days the Dauber and the crew fought the terror and misery; and at last the storms were done.

"A great grey sea was running up the sky," and the ship held on for Valparaiso. The Dauber had found himself: he had done with fear in the Cape Horn terror and become a man. And then without warning comes the end. He is sent with others up to lower the "to'gallants"—and he is up to the topmast first. A sudden gust sends the sail leaping from his hands—and he falls—breaking his back on the deck below. "'It will go on!' he cried aloud, and passed."

And so the Dauber dies, and his rough mates slide his body overboard, and that is the end. But it was not all waste; for the Dauber had found himself through courageous belief in his vision. The vision does not die. "'It will go on!' he cried aloud, and passed."

The great poem closes with a most glorious passage telling how the tall ship sailed majestically into Valparaiso Harbour after all the terror and the fury, and came to rest. It is a great poem; despite its faults it is still very great.

There are flashes of sea-poetry and glorious sea-metaphors in many other poems of Masefield's—*Right Royal* and *Enslaved*, for instance. And whenever I meet these passages I feel the *Dauber* thrill once more, and I say to myself "This is the truest Masefield of all—for he knows the *sea!*"

IV

The Dramatic Art of St. John Hankin

When one studies the history of great peoples one is driven to the conclusion that the national genius shows itself in a periodic uprush—but rarely with supreme power in more than one direction at a time. The marvellous age of Pericles is an exception; and perhaps the Italian Renaissance; but in the matter of *supreme* achievement, whether in Empire, or literature, or music and the other arts, or in science, the national genius usually manifests itself in one direction above all others.

This is certainly true of Literature. The Homeric age was expressed by the Epic; and when the epic genius waned, the Drama rose. In England the greatest literary age is summed up in Shakespeare; and when the drama decayed it gave place to our great national epic. With the coming of the novel, neither drama nor epic could attain supreme heights; and now within the last twenty years or so there are signs that the drama is once more coming to the front.

One looks back through the drama of the centuries which followed Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and it is a curiously meagre view. The wit of Congreve still sparkles somewhat faintly; the humour of Goldsmith still stoops to conquer; and the best plays of Sheridan delight us yet.

But where are the plays of Wycherley and Vanbrugh, of Dryden and Johnson, and the innumerable lesser playwrights? It would seem that dramatic genius was absorbed by the novel, and that the plays then produced were either expressions of life without art, or art without life.

Now in our own day the genius of such men as Bernard Shaw, St. John Hankin, John Galsworthy and J. M. Synge has pulled the drama out of the ruck and set it in its place as one of the greatest of the arts. They may not have attained the burning intensity of the poetic drama—for prose can never cut so deeply into the very heart of things as poetry can—but they have seen real life with all its tragedy and inconsequence, its pathos and its humour, its triumphant courage, and expressed it wonderfully through the medium of their own personality: and that is Art.

Instead of generalizing, let us take a particular play, and test it for art and imagination, for truth and life: There is St. John Hankin's great comedy, *The Charity that Began at Home*. The plot shows the simplicity of genius. Lady Denison and her daughter, Margery, have been persuaded by Hylton, apostle of a new religion of humanity, that true hospitality consists in asking to your house, not the friends whom you wish to meet, but all the unpleasant people who are not wanted by yourself or anybody else. Consequently Lady Denison's house-party consists of a number of incongruous and impossible persons who quarrel among themselves and eventually find out why they have been asked. The young man Verreker, who has been cashiered for falsifying the Mess accounts, becomes engaged to Margery; and all is a chaos of impracticable good intentions. The charity that began at home fails miserably, defeating its own ends by offending everybody whom it was intended to help. Only the matter-of-fact sister, Mrs. Eversleigh, who doesn't believe in all this nonsense, remains triumphant. Now note the touch of genius. All through

the play characters and situations are drawn with a humour so subtle and delicious—sometimes so pathetic, too—that one never ceases laughing inwardly at the hare-brained charity that began at home. Yet when the play is over one suddenly realizes that however muddled and fatuous its expression, the very charity we have been laughing at—the principles and motives that lie at the back of the muddle and kindly vagueness that are the mind of Lady Denison—that these things are essentially right, and only Mrs. Eversleigh is wrong. It is easy enough to put motives and principles in the pillory and make people laugh at them, but to make people laugh in such a way as to gain their sympathy for the very motives they are laughing at requires a sympathetic human insight and a delicate sense of humour possessed by few.

The character-drawing is true, but not in a realistic sense. There never was so perfect a bore as General Bonsor. It is imaginative, and Mr. St. John Hankin's imagination was intensely personal. Each character is true to Art—and in that sense true to life; for the three hours of drama life are real life intensified, condensed, and vivified by heightening the leading characteristics. This is a matter of style and personality. The characters of Charles Dickens's novels live in the exuberance of the author's own vitality; the characters of St. John Hankin's plays by the intensity of his own sympathy and insight. But without style—which is personality expressed in art—the characters of neither the one nor the other could live for us as they do.

What is there that makes Lady Denison a lovable character? She is so inconsequent and vague. ("Thank you, my dear," she says as the mislaid work-basket is restored, "I knew I'd left it somewhere.") She is so easily fussed and bewildered, and does so long to be left alone and out of all the muddle. (*Lady D. miserably.* "Oh, don't bring me into it, please!") Yet you cannot help liking her and seeing

that the author intended you to like her. Perhaps it is her simple and genuine good-heartedness that wins from us something very like affection. It is certainly this in the case of Mrs. Jackson in *The Return of the Prodigal;* and Eustace, the ne'er-do-well son, only voices our own feeling when he says: "Dear old mater. She's not clever, but for real goodness of heart I don't know her equal."

There is the insufferable Miss Triggs, the governess, always on the look-out for slights. ("Of course I know persons who are compelled to support themselves by *teaching* cannot expect to be treated with *ceremony*. *Anything* will do for me.") But it is Margery who reminds us of the life that led her to this bitterness of mind. ("Poor thing, her lodgings looked dreadfully poor and uncomfortable when I went to see her. Here at least she'll have proper meals and feel she's among friends.") And why should we grudge Mrs. Horrocks her one vulgar pleasure of referring to her single aristocratic relation in season and out?

Verreker is a far more subtly drawn character, and for him and all his kind—Eustace in *The Return of the Prodigal*, for instance—Mr. Hankin has always a tolerant sympathy. He is the young man who doesn't care. He has gone wrong himself, and committed a serious error of judgment. But the cruelty of society has not killed him: it has killed his belief in ideals. He goes through the world laughing at himself and everybody else—and there is pain in his laughter. One cannot help liking Verreker and Eustace, not for their lack of principle, but for their essential good-heartedness and for their courage. At the end of the play Verreker refuses to let Margery marry him—for her own sake; and that is splendid of him. But it entails the one weak spot in the play—for it is incredible, artistically and realistically, that she should weakly accept the situation.

If the character of Verreker is the most subtly drawn of all, that of General Bonsor is the most artistically true.

Never was such a perfect bore! Not one of his interminable stories has the slightest point; they never finish, they are a patchwork of irrelevances. Yet they are altogether lovely. Nobody but General Bonsor could say: "It was Ainslie who had four daughters—The Four Graces we used to call them, because there were four of them." Or, "He married Molly Henderson, daughter of old Henderson the Judge—Fat Henderson we used to call him, because he was so stout."

Most clever, too, is the choice of Indian words and proper names in the General's stories. "It was at Jubbulpore it happened. We were up there after Pig." Or, "Travers died afterwards of enteric at Bundelcund, I think, or was it Chittagong? Yes, it was Chittagong, I remember, because I had a touch of fever there myself a year or two later." Or the wonderful story about the Alleghur train: "When I was at Alleghur in '76 we had a train from Goomti that was timed to arrive at Alleghur at 6.38. . . ." There is a note of despair in the very sound of these obscure Indian names.

Then in the end the General finds out that he has been asked to Lady Denison's *because he is a bore* and nobody wants him. And this, I think, is the most pathetic moment of the play:—

> General Bonsor (*too broken with the world's ingratitude to protest further*). "Boring!"
>
> (*Follows Miss Triggs, shaking his poor old head. There is a pause while we realize that one of the most tragic things in life is to be a bore—and to know it.*)

And this brings me to another point—the use of the full stage-direction or reader's guide. It is St. John Hankin's solution of the great problem: How is the dramatist to *comment?* How is he to tell the audience about the

psychological problems of the play? The Greeks, with perfect artistic insight, solved the problem by means of the *Chorus*—a number of persons detached from the scheme of the play and the characters of the drama, or only loosely connected with them, whose business it is, dramatically speaking, to comment on the situation as the author wishes. Shakespeare, greatly daring, rejected the Chorus—which indeed is more suitable for the high dramatic plane upon which the Greeks wrote—and substituted the long soliloquy. His consummate genius more than justified the change. But the soliloquy is not suitable to the modern prose drama—for the convention would be too violent; and so the long stage direction came into being. Here is an example—quoted from the interview between Hylton and Verreker.

> Hylton. "The age of miracles will never pass while there are men and women like Miss Denison in the world."
>
> (*The utter sincerity with which Hylton says this makes it impossible to laugh at him, even good-naturedly, as Verreker would like to do. Hylton, with the glow in his face and the look of the mystic in his eyes, is not a man one can laugh at, while his absolute unconsciousness, his total lack of anything like pose or insincerity, makes Verreker feel that he has never liked him or admired him so much before. It may be madness, but it is a divine madness. There is a silence between them for a moment while Verreker looks at his companion anxiously. Then a slow smile comes into his face, and he speaks quietly.*)

Here then is the author's commentary, placed in a manner less consciously artificial than the Chorus or the soliloquy: but it implies a reading of the text.

The Cassilis Engagement is perhaps the most cruelly subtle of all the plays; and *The Constant Lover* is one of the

most perfect little comedies in the language. Any one of these three plays would entitle St. John Hankin to a "place on the line."

V

The Greatest Dramatic Achievement of Mr. John Galsworthy

If one is to come to a definite conclusion in one's own mind as to what is Mr. Galsworthy's greatest achievement, one must first be quite clear as to what one means by Tragedy in the dramatic sense. 'Tragic' is one of those words the meaning of which has been blurred by loose application; and the tragedy of real life often has nothing dramatically tragic in it at all. A respectable gentleman takes to drink, and after making his family extremely miserable dies a pokey and unpleasant death—and we say "How tragic!" But it is not 'tragic' in a dramatic sense; it is merely a mouldy episode. Those of us who are well acquainted with the slums, and the heartbreak and hopelessness of it all, know very well that of the myriad sordid stories few indeed are dramatically tragic. Apathy does not make for dramatic tragedy; the Tragic Muse does not thrive on fish and chips.

No, something more is needed than a dismal lapse, and that is, mental conflict. There must be struggle somewhere, and reversal of fortune. It may be that man is the sport of the gods, and the gods the sport of fate; it may be that your hero is not strong enough to resist the grind of circumstance or the urge of his own desire, or too stubbornly strong to adapt himself wisely—which is the weakness of strength; but in all this there must be clash and struggle and mental conflict, or a high pitch of dramatic tragedy will not be achieved.

See what Tragedy means to Shakespeare. In every tragic play the reversal of fortune is complete and catas-

trophic, ending in the hero's death. Often the plays are set on the plane of Kings and Queens so that the depth of the fall may seem the greater. But note this : that in every tragedy there is extreme mental conflict, and every time the catastrophe is the hero's own fault—if one may use the word ' fault ' loosely to imply obsession and inadaptability.

Sometimes his obsession is typified as strange elemental forces—the witches in *Macbeth*, for instance ; but it is a kink in his own character that is really the trouble, an upwelling of unconscious instincts as the psycho-analyst would have it. But in Shakespeare's dramas—*Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*—it is the struggle in the powerful mind that makes the tragedy. Mr. Galsworthy, on the other hand, deals with the struggles of the weak against the cruelty of society and circumstance with which he is unfitted to cope. This is so in all the important plays but one, and this one is, to my mind, his supreme achievement.

The most typical Galsworthy play is that called *Justice :* typical in the sense that a weak but generous character is broken and done to death by the cruelty of a rigid and imaginative social system. Falder, the junior clerk, forges a cheque, not for himself, but to save from the persecution of an abominable husband the woman he loves. " Not quite nice, but I've overlooked it," says the kindly senior clerk in speaking of their relationship. But society does not overlook forgery whatever the motive. Falder is tried, and imprisoned. He comes out as a ticket-of-leave man, cannot get work, and forges a testimonial. The woman he loves has proved unfaithful ; and on his second arrest his heart is broken, and he kills himself. A pitiful play. He did not deserve punishment—hardly blame ; yet he was weak, and society broke him.

As a tragedy of the weak the working out of this play is profoundly, terribly moving. Nor can it be contended that

society is not so imaginative and cruel—and *could* not do such things. Go to our London prisons, and there you will find—as I have often done—boys still in their teens shut up in cells, with all the misery and degradation which prison implies, for being stowaways on board ship, though their motive was only to find work in the Colonies. Society has no more imagination than that; and there are stowaway boys in prison at this moment.

The atmosphere of the play is masterly: the inevitable nature of the crime; the relentlessness of the trial, from which there is no escape; the terror of solitary confinement; the hopelessness of after-prison life. In such an atmosphere one feels that Falder was made by nature to be broken—and there is none to help. And yet—and this is the masterstroke of the play—character after character betrays by word or action or look alone the fact that he has realized that a great wrong is being done, and yet there seems to be no alternative. The Junior Partner, the old clerk, the prison doctor, above all the Prison Governor himself—all see the wrong, are sorry for their helplessness, and helpless in their sorrow.

Such is the tragedy of weakness; and the play *Loyalties* is like unto it, except that in this play the hero—or the victim—shows a devil-may-care courage till the concentration of loyalties pushes him out of life. It is the same with *The Silver Box*, and so forth. Mr. Galsworthy has a kindly feeling for the weak and kickable; he shows them bound hand and foot and being kicked to death, and then seems to say, "Isn't this *cruel?* I'm sorry about it—but what are we to do?"

But *once* Mr. Galsworthy has given us a tragedy of strength; and this, the play called *Strife*, is, to my mind, his greatest achievement. In form, character-drawing, and dramatic development, this is an almost perfect play. The tragedies of weakness are truly great, but this tremendous tragedy of

strength, in my opinion, reaches a higher plane. It is not a tragedy of love. The whole burning interest centres in the clash of two strong wills: and in the end there is "a woman dead, and the two best men broken." Nor is it in any sense a propaganda play expressing the author's own political and economic views with regard to Labour against Capital. What views are held by Mr. Galsworthy I have no idea. But everybody knows that a system typified by Mr. Anthony's attitude of mind must be cruel and unjust, however bravely it may apparently be justified.

Mr. Anthony represents the shareholders; he is of the old, strong type, whose principles will not allow him to give way one inch to the men. Four times he has fought them, and four times he has won. The rest of the shareholders are in favour of compromise. David Roberts is the leader of the strikers. "There is hell-fire in his tongue," for he has been made hard and bitter by a sense of injustice and great wrong. In either case the principle far transcends all personal consideration. "Masters are Masters—men are men," says Mr. Anthony; and to him any relaxation is an intolerable and dangerous weakness—dangerous for the country and the class to which he belongs. To David Roberts Capital is a white-faced monster with bloody lips sucking the very life of the women and children of the poor. For the sake of posterity they must fight it, fight it to the death.

There is an astonishing economy and artistic compression in the dialogue. Every sentence tells, and there is not one phrase, epithet, or even exclamation that has not its direct bearing upon the unfolding of character or the development of plot. Of discursive or rambling talk there is absolutely none—and yet one never feels oppressed by a sense of unnaturalness. When Scantlebury, the shareholder, in the First Act speaks of a quill pen as "The homely product of the goose," he displays his mentality as surely as Shylock

does when he mouths, at his first entry, "Three thousand ducats—well?" And in the dying Annie Roberts's stubborn, "Yes 'm," "Yes 'm," during Mrs. Underwood's visit, there is more intensity of meaning than any longer outburst could have conveyed.

In this play there are two long speeches—actual speeches—not lengthy, unreal monologues silencing the conversation of the rest. There is Mr. Anthony's speech after his dramatic retirement. ("Gentlemen, you have disgraced me. I resign my position as Chairman of this Board.") It is a brave speech which follows, spoken by a hard, courageous old gentleman. Too old to move with the times, he cannot understand that a humane outlook does not imply a "soft breed." Cold, and full of courage, there is one man only on either side for whom he can feel admiration—and that man is his enemy, David Roberts.

But the great speech is Roberts's speech to the strikers by the banks of the canal. Most wonderful is the art by which he is made to beat down opposition and gain the mastery. There is courage and fire in his words, and bitterness and pathos; and when at the end he has his hearers under full control, and he turns from things of the moment—their own suffering, reaching out to the future with an appeal for courage in the righting of wrong for the sake of the men and women who will come after, his speech attains a height of natural oratory most moving and splendid. Then the hurried whisper, "Roberts! Roberts!"—and the news of his wife's death, hastened by cold and hunger—there is no one who can *time* the moment of dramatic entry with such perfect skill and precision as Mr. Galsworthy.

This power of gauging the dramatic moment and placing the inevitable word upon it was never more admirably shown than in the last scene of all, when Roberts enters, not knowing that things have passed beyond him, and that the paper of compromise which is to shatter all his hopes—

and Mr. Anthony's—has already been signed. His wife is dead, and the two strong men, deserted and broken, are left face to face. I know no more poignant repetition of a single word in all drama than Roberts's despairing whisper of the word "Home!" A few lines of context will explain :—

> Roberts. Then you're no longer Chairman of the Company! (*Breaks into half-mad laughter.*) Ah, ha—ah, ha, ha! They've thrown ye over—thrown over their Chairman: Ah—ha—ha! (*with a sudden dreadful calm*). So—they've done us both down, Mr. Anthony?
>
> Harness (*coming down and laying his hand on Roberts' sleeve*). For shame, Roberts! Go home quietly, man, go home!
>
> Roberts (*tearing his arm away*). Home? (*shrinking together—in a whisper*). "Home!"

The two broken men are left face to face.

> *Anthony moves with an effort. He turns to Roberts, who looks at him. They stand several seconds gazing at each other fixedly; Anthony lifts his hand as though to salute, but lets it fall. The expression of Roberts's face changes from hostility to wonder. They bend their heads in token of respect.*

This surely is the full dignity of tragedy. But the great play ends on a note of irony: for the terms of compromise are the very terms suggested before the struggle began!

VI

Joseph Conrad.

There is nothing in all the history of literature more amazing than the coming of Joseph Conrad into the very front rank of English writers, not only for the absolute

mastery of a language which he did not begin to learn till he was nineteen, but also for the profound and far-reaching influence he has had and will continue to have on English prose writing all over the world.

The works of certain writers such as W. H. Hudson and Conrad have been profoundly influenced by the environment of their early years, so much so that it is impossible to dissociate them from that influence. That Keats lived at Hampstead is neither here nor there. One's appreciation of Swinburne is not helped by learning that he had a house at Putney. But that Hudson's boyhood was passed in the Pampas matters very much indeed. That Joseph Conrad spent all his early life at sea in the English Merchant Service matters more than anything else—so much so that before one discusses his writings it is essential to speak of the man's own history.

Joseph Conrad, whose surname was Korenziowski, was a Pole, and his boyhood was spent in Cracow. From an early age he was a reading boy. "I read, what did I not read!"

His first love was the sea, his earliest determination to become an English seaman. And so in 1877 he joined an English steamer bound for the sea of Azov and England; and before long found himself at Lowestoft. Then he became an Englishman, learning the language which he was to use with such mastery, from "sailors of the Norfolk coast, coast men, with steady eyes, mighty limbs, and gentle voice."

In 1884 he became Master in the English Merchant Service, for he had never looked back from his life's object, and for ten years lived that sea-life which he has told with a conviction and intensity never surpassed in literature. Then it was that he formed his friendship with John Galsworthy and Edward Garnett, and received from them the encouragement which turned him from sailor to one of the very greatest of English men of letters.

Nineteen years of age before he began to learn the English language! It is a miracle hardly to be believed, yet perhaps in this amazing fact lies half the secret of his style. For every word he used was chosen with the meticulous care of a foreigner, a master indeed of our tongue, but not a native of it. Slowly and painfully, with most earnest concentration, he built up every sentence, giving to the English word a somewhat un-English atmosphere, to be felt rather than explained.

"If you knew," he said, "how much every line has cost me to get out, you would understand my anxiety that none should be lost."

It is this strange atmosphere which is the most striking feature of all Conrad's writing. To read a single page is to enter upon a new plane, a Conrad world, more intense, more infinitely suggestive of the soul of things than the world of experience. The quality of his style is almost magical, with such subtle power and exactitude are the words manipulated. Yet it is not in the unravelling of complexity of motives that his power lies, but rather in the turning of a steady, searchlight gaze upon a simple and unchanging mentality, revealing it to us with a clearness that is uncanny.

This constant mentality displays the most complex emotions as the battery of events is brought to bear upon it; and Conrad dissects these emotions with a direct and subtle analysis that leaves us marvelling. But the basic character remains unchanged. Lingard's fidelity in *The Rescue*, for instance, remains constant for all his mental suffering and conflict.

For Conrad's characters do not develop. When we first meet them they have already reached maturity of motive, and they do not change. It is his own strong grip of reality and simplicity of insight that make his character-drawing a revelation of truth. Every particular characteristic that he studies implies something universal; and it is not the

development of character which he portrays, but the change of situation playing all round and about an unchanging mentality.

To put it in another way: his characters may be likened to Captain McWhirr in his own story, *Typhoon*. Captain McWhirr, a conscious mind, simple, unimaginative, and infinitely steadfast; and all round him, seeking with terrific but unconscious power to overwhelm him utterly, this chaotic turmoil of the typhoon, a blind and elemental fury of hell, and McWhirr, the human intelligence, minute in the midst of it all, carries on triumphantly.

Above all, it is the setting of Conrad's novels which idealizes his characters to heroic proportions, like the actors in Greek Tragedy.

The Greek tragedians idealized their characters to more than human greatness. The very actors wore the mask and high tragic shoes to render them unearthly. Conrad loves to portray his characters in a world to us strange and remote—a world of waters gleaming under a tropical sun, or lashed in equatorial frenzy; a world of sun-scorched islands, swamp, and heavy vegetation. And there the white men and women, in a strange exotic setting, seem larger than life, more tragic in isolation.

It is not only in the delineation of character that Conrad shows his clear, penetrating vision. In describing places or events he fixes upon essentials with such power and conviction that the scene remains ever after memorable and vivid. Who can forget the sight of that struggling mass of Chinamen sliding, as they fight, with a crash against the cabin walls of the rolling ship?

One opens a page at random and reads this: "There was nothing for it but to go below with shovels and try to right her, and there we were in that vast hold, gloomy like a cavern, the tallow dips stuck and flickering on the beams, the gale howling above, the ship tossing about like mad on

her side; . . . At every tumble of the ship you could see vaguely in the dim light *men falling down with a great flourish of shovels*." It is the truth and exactitude of this last phrase that make the scene in the hold unforgettable.

I open *The Mirror of the Sea* as if taking the sortes in an old Bible—and these are the first lines I read: "We saw the crew of the brig from afar working at the pumps—still pumping on that wreck, which already had settled so far down that the gentle, low swell, over which our boats rose and fell easily without a check to their speed, welling up almost level with her head-rails, plucked at the ends of broken gear swinging desolately under her naked bowsprit." It is *right*—the very vision of memory is there, as in all Conrad's descriptions.

It is the Sea—the tropical Sea studded with Eastern Islands—that forms the main setting of Conrad's work; not because he especially wanted to describe the sea, or to bring home to us with vivid impressionism those unforgettable islands. It was simply because he knew the sea and the islands of the East better than anything else; that he was possessed of a most penetrating insight and feeling for essentials, and a power of clothing his perception in words as clear and convincing as the thing they symbolize. He knew the sea as a sailor; and he knew it as a poet—for though he wrote in prose his work is almost epic. Only two other writers in the language can approach him in his understanding of the sea—John Masefield, and Melville, the creator of *Moby Dick*. Was ever such a night scene, for instance, as the calm, hot night described in *Lord Jim*—the pilgrims asleep on deck, and the white wake stretching out straight as the pencil line on the chart? For Conrad knew the sea in all its moods and significance: he knew its enchantment, its furies, its "cynical indifference to human suffering and courage," its "irresponsible consciousness of power," and its "unfathomable cruelty." And not only are his descriptions

full of atmosphere and colour more intense and live than those of any other writer—except at times those two—but, though a foreigner, he expressed his amazing insight in the noble rhythmic prose of perfect English.

And Conrad knew ships. As he himself wrote, "The love that is given to ships is profoundly different from the love men feel for every other work of their hands—the love they bear to their houses, for instance—because it is untainted by the pride of possession. The pride of skill, the pride of responsibility, the pride of endurance there may be, but otherwise it is a disinterested sentiment. No seaman ever cherished a ship, even if she belonged to him, merely because of the profit she put in his pocket. No one, I think, ever did; for a ship-owner, even of the best, has always been outside the pale of that sentiment, embracing in a feeling of intimate, equal fellowship the ship and the man, backing each other against the implacable, if sometimes dissembled, hostility of their world of waters."

Conrad's ships are alive—almost sentient. Like the beautiful women of his novels, they stand with a noble grace in a far-off setting of tropical seas, outlandish vegetation, and a few strange Europeans with unfathomable pasts. The perfect lines of his ships, their delicate response, their bird-like beauty of motion, all suggest something more than man-made structures of iron and wood, something with which these strange, glorious women alone can be compared.

One more point: it is not the story of his novels that matters much. One page would tell the plot of most of them. The basic lines are extremely simple, however complex that play of emotions which Conrad handles with such mastery. What really matters is his marvellously convincing psychology, subtle to the movement of an eyelid; strange in atmosphere as a dream that has come true.

VII

Humour in the Contemporary Essay

Humour in literature is not an absolute thing.

That which seems funny to one man will leave another man glum; the jokes of one nation appear to another as gross banality; and what delighted our forefathers merely sets the present day yawning. When Hephaistos, the lame god, entered the halls of Olympus the gods were seized with "unquenchable laughter." To us their behaviour is in questionable taste, and the object of their mirth not in the least funny. The only laugh mentioned in the *Aeneid* is on the occasion when the skipper of the losing boat in a race throws his coxswain overboard, and the poor old gentleman sits on a rock and is violently sick. Old *Punch* jokes leave us cold as the present-day *Punch* joke leaves the American. "I read *Punch* from cover to cover," said an American critic, "then I went outside and kicked a strange dog." The German sausage joke seems gross to the Englishman; while a Frenchman cannot see the humour of "The better 'ole."

All the same a man with a sense of humour *knows* that he knows what is funny. It is no good arguing about it—a thing is really funny, or it isn't. If it is, one is sorry for the people who can't see it; if it isn't, one is still more sorry for the people who think it is. It is all a question of subtlety of perception—whatever that may really mean.

Perhaps the most subtle test of literary humour is the essay. The humour of a story or a play may depend very largely upon the situation, character-drawing, and dialogue. The humour of an essay is intrinsic. What is funny to the writer is made funny to us through sheer delicacy of taste in expression.

Humour in the essay is of many kinds, depending upon the

personal outlook of the writer. The humour of E. V. Lucas one might call 'perceptive' and delicate; that of Robert Lynd is whimsical; while the humour of G. K. Chesterton is paradoxical, every joke standing upon its head; yet all three writers have this in common—that they have mastered the art of being funny without ever seeming to say, "This is a joke." That is essential in the writing of the humorous essay, in which the quality of writing matters more than anything else. The expression of every funny idea must appear effortless.

The humour of Robert Lynd, I have said, is whimsical. His essay called "Eggs: an Easter Homily" will exemplify what I mean. The main idea is whimsical. He sets himself to write on Easter Eggs, about which he professes to know little or nothing; at the end of the essay one knows, if possible, less. It is the treatment alone that matters—and that is delicious. First the intrusion of the unexpected is managed with a finesse that is far more than a trick. See how he begins. He tells us he wished to write a seasonable essay on Easter Eggs, and knowing nothing about the subject, looked it up in the Encyclopædia, and this is what he found: "Egg, Augustus Leopold (1816–1863), English painter, was born on the second of May 1816 in London, where his father carried on business as a gunmaker."

This unexpected intrusion occurs again lower down. In the Encyclopædia he found, he says, every sort of egg except the Easter Egg. "There were birds' eggs, and reptiles' eggs, and fishes' eggs, and molluscs' eggs, and crustaceans' eggs, and insects' eggs, and frogs' eggs, and Augustus Egg, and the eggs of the duck-billed platypus. . . ."

Very whimsical, again, is the mock-serious discussion of the number of fishes' eggs. To pick a joke to pieces may seem a philistine performance; but when one is deliberately analyzing a particular kind of humour, it may be excused. If the absurdity of deliberate misinterpretation is humorous,

then the following passage is funny. It may not seem funny without its context; but certainly when I read it, it gave me what the French call, so inimitably, "sunshine in the stomach." "'The sturgeon lays about 7,000,000; the herring 50,000; the turbot 14,311,000; the sole 134,000; the perch 280,000.' This is the sort of sentence I always read over to myself several times. And when I come to 'the turbot, 14,311,000,' I pause and try to picture to myself the man who counted them. How does one count 14,311,000? How long does it take? If one lay awake all night trying to put oneself to sleep by counting turbot's eggs instead of sheep, one would hardly have done more than make a fair start by the time the maid came in to draw the curtains. . . . Our friends meeting us later in the day would say with concern 'Hullo! you're looking rather cheap. What have you been doing?' and when we answered bitterly, 'Counting turbot's eggs,' they would hurry off with an apprehensive look on their faces."

Mr. Robert Lynd's felicity of comparison gives me constant joy. This, for instance: "The duck is a plain bird, something like a charwoman." One word only—but how humorously picturesque!

The humour in Mr. G. K. Chesterton's essays is almost always paradoxical. He is a master of paradox; and if one feels at times that his whole intellectual world is up-ended, and that the paradox has forced the idea, this may occasionally shake one's confidence in his judgment, but it never spoils his humour.

No one but Mr. Chesterton could have written that inimitable series of essays called *The Defendant*. No one else would have thought of defending such things as skeletons, planets, or nonsense; he defends the indefensible, or the unattackable, with such stoutness of conviction, such flashing brilliance of fence, that one feels, with a gasp of astonishment, that the quite impossible has been achieved with

brilliant success, but only because the author, in attempting it, hit upon the happy idea of standing on his head.

The essay which for sheer brilliance of conception always fills me with the greatest astonishment is that "In Defence of Nonsense," in which the author claims, very characteristically, that "nonsense is a new Literature—we might almost say a new sense." He claims that such nonsense as that of Edward Lear is a discovery of the nineteenth century. "We fancy," he writes, "that if the account of the Knave's trial in *Alice in Wonderland* had been published in the seventeenth century it would have been bracketed with Bunyan's *Trial of Faithful* as a parody on the State prosecutions of the time. We fancy that if the *Dong with the Luminous Nose* had appeared in the same period every one would have called it a dull satire on Oliver Cromwell."

His justification for nonsense literature is that it is an escape—an escape into a world "where we might discover that Humpty Dumpty and the March Hare were Professors and Doctors of Divinity enjoying a mental holiday"; and his conclusion is that the logical person who has discovered that faith is nonsense may know at last that nonsense is faith.

But Mr. Chesterton is not merely a conjurer of the greatest brilliance. One is amazed at times to find his insight so profoundly true. His belief in the simple rather than the complex carries more than the conviction of clever words. "If a man found a coil of rope in a desert he could at least think of all the things that can be done with a coil of rope; and some of them might be practical. He could tow a boat or lasso a horse. He could play cat's-cradle or pick oakum. He could construct a rope-ladder for an eloping heiress, or cord her boxes for a travelling maiden aunt. He could learn to tie a bow, or he could hang himself. Far otherwise with the unfortunate traveller who should

find a telephone in the desert. You can telephone with a telephone : you cannot do anything else with it."

Yet his truth is not always the truth which he set out to emphasize or establish. When he pokes fun at the vegetarians for making their vegetable concoction look like the old meat courses, and compares them to a converted cannibal fitting his food together to look like a missionary, one feels that he has " hit the mark "—but not precisely the mark he was aiming at.

When an artist looks at a landscape with his head right on one side, he does so because at this unusual angle the colours show themselves at their right values—the true leading lines are emphasized ; he can thus convey the scene to canvas with vividness and conviction. Then when Mr. Chesterton ' stands on his head ' he sees the same things that we see, but he views them from a different angle and very often seizes the unexpected truth.

I have called the humour in Mr. E. V. Lucas's essays ' perceptive,' by which I mean that he has a *flair* for the delicately ludicrous and the power of fixing it in just the right words to make others see it too.

It is difficult to quote, for it is a general tone or flavour rather than specific jokes. What I refer to is the little observant humorous touches, as in the description of old gentlemen playing bowls : " Could the admirable elderly player who always lifted his right foot and held it poised in the air while delivering the bowl be Mr. Jethro Ham ? " Or this : " And how intent they were on the progress not only of their own bowls, but of their opponent's too—but of course with a more personal, more intimate, interest in their own, even to following its curve with their back-bones, and to some extent spinally reproducing it, as conscientious players involuntarily do."

Old gentlemen playing bowls are funny to watch, and Mr. Lucas makes us *see* how funny they are by describing their

action with a precision of words and a most careful and artistic rhythm of prose, reminding one of the Authorized Version, or the works of Sir Thomas Browne. Read that last sentence once more: "following its curve with their back-bones, and to some extent spinally reproducing it, as conscientious players involuntarily do." Now take a sentence from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* for the sake of its rhythm, and compare the two. "But to subsist in bones and be but pyramidally extant is a fallacy in duration." In both there is the deliberate obtaining of effect by means of rhythm; and a rhythm so similar that one wonders if both were not based on the rhythmic prose of the Bible.

Mr. Lucas's essays, then, are marked for delicate perception and a most nice choice and arrangement of words. Notice the little isolated phrase in the following, for instance: "It was as I stooped to pick up the sixpence which had suddenly gleamed at me under the seat of the now empty carriage, that I said to myself that finding things is one of the purest of earthly joys. And how rare!"

One more example will make the contention quite clear:—

"Once I knew many psalms: I know them no longer, but I have never forgotten a ridiculous piece of dialogue in a book called *The World of Wit and Humour* which I was studying, on weekdays, at the same time, how many years ago:

"'Father, I have spilt the butter. What shall I do?'

"'Rub it briskly with a woollen fabric.'

"'Why?'

"'Because friction generates caloric, which volatilizes the oleaginous particles of the stearine matter.'

"And once I knew many psalms."

VIII

Kenneth Grahame

Nothing is more noticeable in modern literature than the growth of sympathetic insight—by which I do not by any means imply a morbid introspection. This somewhat new development shows itself markedly in two directions: a very real and successful endeavour to understand the mentality of animals, to enter into that strange, inarticulate realm that lies so close to us and is yet so infinitely remote; and secondly, to *re*-enter that delicious world which most of us have more than half forgotten—the plane upon which the children live.

Among our modern men of letters there are not a few who show an understanding of children, an amazing memory of what it is like to be a child, never before attained. Even Shakespeare's boys are pert, or effeminate and un-boylike; while his girls (though hardly children) are more like boys—possibly because in those days boys took all the female parts. But in our own time we have had that wonderful story of Richard Jefferies' called *Bevis;* Kipling with his *Just So Stories*, *Wee-Willie-Winkle*, *The Drums of the Fore and Aft*—and so forth; Hugh Walpole with his *Jeremy;* Sir James Barrie with *Peter Pan;* and many more—all of them showing a fresh and charming insight and discernment. But if I were asked to name the writer who of all others walks most easily in the world of children as one of themselves, who can take the child's standpoint on the one hand, and on the other has the consummate power of leading the grown-up back into the children's world, I should choose Kenneth Grahame.

To have written for grown-ups the two best books about children in the language—for so I believe *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days* to be—is a most enviable achievement.

But to have also written what is in some respects the best of all stories written for children, not *about* them, is an astonishing feat. I mean, of course, *The Wind in the Willows*.

Two qualities in Mr. Grahame made this double success possible: sympathetic insight, and style. To write such a book as *The Wind in the Willows* implies an insight into child mentality, a perfect understanding of what children love; but this would not have been enough had the sense of style and humour been absent. *The Wind in the Willows* is a book about animals, but not in the least in the sense in which *The Jungle Books* are about animals. The power and charm of Kipling's stories lie in the fact that his jungle beasts never think or speak off their own plane—we accept their human speech as a mere convention by which we can be made to understand their animal thoughts; with all his wisdom Baloo is essentially a bear, and Kaa is never more than python. But in *The Wind in the Willows* the animals—the Mole, the Water-rat, the Badger, and the Toad, though utterly impossible as the most fantastic dream, are yet completely real and convincing. And the secret of it is this, that Mr. Grahame has never lost the children's imaginative power—that power which creates a ship out of the nursery table, a dog out of a wooden brick, an elephant from a chair; which blinks all difficulties and incongruities till they are simply non-existent. Nobody finds much difficulty in the fact that the animals in a story talk in human words and discuss things of essentially human interest; but it is only through a child's imagination that we can read in the very first lines, "The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash . . ."; or the meeting with the Rat in the little boat "painted blue outside and white within—just the size for two animals"; the "fat wicker luncheon-basket," filled with that splendid lunch;

the Rat's charming house in the River Bank; the "dressing-gown and slippers" for the Mole who had fallen into the water. The whole story is on the human plane, and yet somehow the Mole is always a Mole—even when he wears goloshes—the Rat is a Rat, the Badger the best of Badgers. Even the Toad driving furiously in his motor-car is essentially right, for the whole secret is that Mr. Grahame can see with the inward eye of a child, he can conjure up for us the lovely little animals' home in river bank or underground just as a child's imagination loves to picture them; Badger's house, for instance, with its stout oaken comfortable-looking doors, its floor of well-worn red brick, its wide hearth, where burnt a fire of logs, between two attractive chimney-corners—a couple of high-backed settles—the long table—and rows of spotless plates—it is all so cosy and satisfying, so entirely convincing, so outrageously impossible. A child can think like that, but to express such ideas in a convincing way requires a master of style.

It is by style alone that the blending of true animal instinct with the most impossible imaginative descriptions is made possible. For instance, in the middle of a highly imaginative passage we suddenly find this: "... We have only the word 'smell' to include the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of the animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling. It was one of those mysterious fairy calls from out the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while as yet he could not clearly remember what it was. He stopped dead in his tracks, his nose searching hither and thither in its efforts to recapture the fine filament, the telegraphic current, that had so strongly moved him. A moment, and he had caught it again; and with it this time came recollection in fullest flood ... Home!" ...

That is true to nature and true to art; and its truth seems

to lift the impossible story on to the plane of the normal. It is *style* that makes the chapter on "The Wild Wood" so thrilling and so true: the growing terror of the little lost Mole holds one to the very heart. There is something of *real* child's terror in those isolated sentences—"Then the whistlings began"; and later on, "Then the pattering began." While in that really tremendous chapter called "The Piper at the Gates" one is lifted—by sheer power of style—out of the world of experience altogether; one sees the god Pan as a poet sees him. It is style—and personal sense of humour—that speed the narrative in the rapid passages—such as the motor-car chase, or the return to Toad Hall. Here is a quotation: "Well might the terrified weasels dive under the tables and spring madly up at the windows! . . . The mighty Badger, his whiskers bristling, his great cudgel whistling through the air; Mole, black and grim, brandishing his stick and shouting his awful war-cry, 'A Mole! A Mole!' Rat, desperate and determined, his belt bulging with weapons of every age and every variety . . ." and so the battle is told. This is a masterpiece of mock heroics. Thackeray has done it in *The Rose and the Ring*, but to my mind even Thackeray fails to reach this splendour of rapid nonsense. Here is the passage for comparison: "Ah! if I had the pen of Sir Archibald Alison, my dear friends, would I not entertain you with an account of a most tremendous shindy, should not fine blows be struck, dreadful wounds be delivered, arrows darken the air, cannon-balls crash through the battalions, cavalry charge infantry, infantry pitch into cavalry, bugles blow, drums beat, horses neigh, soldiers roar, swear, hurray, officers shout out 'Forward, my men! This way, lads! Give it 'em, boys! Fight for King Giglio and the cause of right! King Padella for ever!' Would I not describe all this, and in the very finest language too? But this humble pen does not possess the skill necessary for the description of combats."

Dream Days and *The Golden Age* are very different, but every bit as perfect. With unsurpassed insight they tell of the nursery life of four children left to be looked after by Aunts and Governesses; and assuredly no stories have ever been written which place one back so surely and easily into the child's attitude and outlook. The child's attitude towards the grown-ups, the Olympians—amazed but kindly tolerance of the stupidity that fails to take any advantage whatever of power and opportunity is one of the key-notes of the books; and it is emphasized by the immediate sympathy between the children and those Olympians who do understand—such as the Artist and the White-washed Uncle.

But a greater achievement of insight is the children's talk among themselves—their games, their adventures, their quarrels, their essential friendliness. But greatest of all, I think, both for style and insight, are those passages in the stories where Mr. Grahame speaks of the child by himself—for then one feels the years roll back and dissolve—and again one is a little boy—and all the fresh things, the right things, instinctively thrill one again as they did when one was ten. Such a passage is that called "A Holiday." "The masterful wind was up and out, shouting and chasing, the lord of the morning. Poplars swayed and tossed with a roaring swish; dead leaves sprang aloft, and whirled into space; and all the clear-swept heaven seemed to thrill with sound like a great harp." It is the wind and the boy who are companions this morning: "The hearty wind was calling to me companionably from where he swung and bellowed in the tree-tops." It is a glorious chapter, both for style and for vision, often reaching heights which one would think that only poetry could scale.

This chapter, too, contains one of those clear glimpses into the very-small-boy mind which always fill me with delighted amusement. Harold is the small boy; and to

read of Harold's games alone is to realize that Mr. Grahame is a wizard with more than second sight. In this chapter it is "Muffin man" that Harold is playing by himself: "To pass along busy streets of your own building for ever ringing an imaginary bell and offering airy muffins of your own make to a bustling, thronging crowd of your own creation—there were points about the game, it cannot be denied." Then there is the delicious game of "Clubmen"—"a performance consisting of a measured progress round the room arm in arm with an imaginary companion of reverend years"—and so on. There is the game of "Conspirators": "I heard him murmur 'My God,' said the Czar, 'my plans are frustrated!'" And most beautiful of all, I think, is Harold's "death-letter." You can never guess what Harold's games are going to be about; and who but Harold would have thought of drawing up a last will and testament—a "death-letter" as he calls it—by way of relaxation and amusement? And a lovely death-letter it is.

These three books never grow dull, and their vision never grows dim. To read them is to enjoy once more in memory the very best of life.

IX

W. H. Hudson.

Some writers leap rocket-like into popularity, blaze for a little, wane, and go out. Others, whose merit requires greater insight and discernment to detect, climb bit by bit into recognition, but having once achieved a place they never lose it. Such was the genius of W. H. Hudson. Slowly, and with no eye to personal success or greatness, his books one after another gained an enthusiastic hearing; till now he is recognized not only as one of our foremost men of letters, but as a natural historian of the first order, and as a fiery champion of the weak and oppressed.

He came of fine British stock—Devon, New England, and a touch of Irish. He was born about the year 1846, in the South American Pampas; and there in the open plains and under the wide sky his boyhood was spent. Such an environment necessarily had a profound influence upon his character and outlook—the natural surroundings so free and untrammelled, the human society so strange and romantic, a blend of primitive independence and old-world Spanish manners. There as a child he absorbed the very spirit of wild Nature—became, as it were, one with Nature, so that later on, when he came to express himself in books, he seemed like the very voice of Nature itself—the earth, the open sky, the windy plains and the trees. Nature in all her infinite variety speaks through all his work; and this it is, perhaps, that distinguishes him from other Nature-lovers who were also men of letters—such as Richard Jefferies—that whereas they speak as keen and loving observers of Nature, he identifies himself with Nature, as it were; and reveals to us our true relation to Nature through the long æons of evolutionary progress.

At sixteen a great blow fell upon him, and he became an invalid. And then it was that his great energy turned from action to contemplation; from contemplation to creative writing. From this time, possibly, dates his great love and pity for the wrongfully oppressed—his anger against man the slaughterer, the collector and destroyer. And it was chiefly the little wild creatures that he loved and pitied—the timid beasts that man exterminated—the uncouth creatures such as rats and pigs, for whom no one has a good word. His heart was large enough to embrace all living things; and his courage strong enough to inveigh against the brutality and stupidity of man who persecutes them.

Later on he came to London; and there his life was a hard struggle for the barest necessities; for it was long before

there appeared an editor of sufficient insight to recognize his greatness. Little by little, however, he came into his own; till at last he was allowed a small pension to keep him from actual destitution. Yet so little did he care for personal comfort that, when at long last his books began to produce a modest competence, he gave up his pension, and lived in the simplest possible manner without it. He passed his time in the little towns and villages of the west of England—especially Penzance—among the simplest of the people. And when towards the close of his life he began to ask and receive an adequate price for his books, it was not of himself he was thinking. "I want the money for a purpose," he would say; and no one knew what that purpose was till he was dead, when it was found he had left it all to protect his little friends the wild birds.

There is a quality about Hudson's style, and a distinction which are peculiarly his own: a quiet intensity of power, a grasp of essentials, a choice of words that shows the highest culture and literary taste, and yet is not in the least precious or pedantic. His personality brims over in every book, and yet in his books there is the widest variety—no two books are alike. It is perhaps his intimate acquaintance with English literature that lends his style so much of its distinctive quality; in everything he wrote this quality is felt. It pervades every sentence like a fine atmosphere. It stamps every subject of which he treats with a delicate personal "hall-mark."

His books are widely different, but they may be grouped. There are the South American books, spacious in outlook as the plains and the sky, yet full of sadness as the title of that book of boyhood written long afterward in London, when memories of La Plata were like a dream—*Far Away and Long Ago*. In this beautiful book of memories he tells of his father, and his father's house, of feuds and long-forgotten wars, of the aspect of the plains in calm and storm, and all

the strange wild life of the Pampas; and always with that same *distinction* of style that marks all Hudson's writing. Let me quote a few lines--just a random description of a storm: "The stupendous, slaty-black darkness, mixed with yellow clouds of dust, gained on us, and before we got to the gate the terrified screams of wild birds reached our ears, and glancing back we saw multitudes of gulls and plover flying madly before the storm, trying to keep ahead of it. Then a swarm of big dragonflies came like a cloud over us, and was gone in an instant, and just as we reached the gate, the first big drops splashed down in the form of liquid mud. We had hardly got indoors before the tempest broke in its full fury; a blackness as of night, a blended uproar of thunder and wind, blinding flashes of lightning, and torrents of rain." One might equally quote any passage from any chapter. They are all stamped with the same individuality.

Then there are the South American Nature books, so true and intimate, so closely observant, that one must go back to Darwin to find their like; and Darwin had not the style of Hudson. Of all his revealing and sympathetic descriptions, that of the Puma, with its courage and friendliness towards man, its pathetic and unresisting death, touches me most nearly. ("The puma made no attempt to free itself from the lasso, but seemed to know what was coming, for it began to tremble, the tears ran from its eyes, and it whined in the most pitiful manner.") Here, as ever, with sympathy there is greatness of style. The South American Tales, *El Ombu*, and others, are full of sadness. They tell of lives lived remotely, but often passionately, in wild and far-off lands.

Very much akin to the South American romances are his imaginative tales, such as *Dead Man's Plack*, and his stories of intense realism, such as *An Old Thorn*. The former is a most lovely and sad romance of Saxon days; full of that

infinite regret for the death of all beautiful things which gives a tone to so much of Hudson's thought. See the beauty and the truth of the description of Elfrida drowned: "The swift fretting current had carried away her hood, and pulled out her long, abundant silver-white hair, and the current played with her hair, now pulling it straight out, then spreading it wide over the surface, mixing its silvery threads with the hair-like green blades of the floating water-grass. And the dead face was like marble; and the wide-open eyes, that had never wholly lost their brilliance and the beautiful lung-wort blue colour, were like living eyes—living and gazing through the crystal-clear running water at the group of nuns staring down with horror-struck eyes at her."

To my mind, *An Old Thorn* is one of the most poignantly pathetic stories ever written. It is the story of a great wrong: the callous hanging of a simple man whose crime was the stealing of a sheep to keep his wife and children from starvation. And interwoven with the story, brooding over it, as it were, with a dark and sinister influence, is the superstition bound up with the old isolated Thorn tree. No good for the man to cling to the tree, "and touch it with his body and face, and pray for its forgiveness." For judges believed in hanging for theft in those days—and the man was hanged. It is a marvellous story; and its power and intense pathos owe much to the manner of its telling. For it is told with direct, unblinking force. It is the baldness of statement combined with a noble quality of style that makes this story so infinitely forceful—so that after all these years one's blood boils at the very thought of such outrageous wrong.

The greatest and perhaps the more important part of Hudson's writings is his work dealing with Nature—trees and flowers, beasts and birds—above all, birds. In the first place, through long contemplation of the lives of beasts

and birds in wild, far lands, Hudson had gained a power of intimate observation which has rarely been equalled. It becomes part of his own nature to think with the birds and beasts, to know instinctively what they were going to do next, so that it seems almost as if Nature's dumb world had become articulate in him at last. He knows what animals think and feel. Read such a passage as that on the Dog's World of Smells, or that on the Vulture, or the Gannets of Land's End, and one will *feel* a sense of intimacy—almost of identification. For there is no egotism in Hudson; his great and strong personality is above selfishness, and large enough to embrace all living things.

But somehow the note that always seems to me to be the keynote of Hudson's whole outlook is that of great sadness in the contemplation of springtime and the renewal of young life, and infinite regret for all wasted beauty. "The Return of the Chiff-chaff" is instinct with this great pitying sadness: "Surely, I said, the spring-time verdure and bloom, this fragrance of the furze, the infinite blue of the heaven, the bell-like double note of this my little feathered neighbour in the alder tree, flitting hither and thither, light and airy himself as a wind-fluttered alder-leaf—surely this is enough to fill and satisfy any heart, leaving no room for a grief so vain and barren. . . ." And again: "Is there no escape, then, from this intolerable sadness—from the thought of springs that have been, the beauteous multitudinous life that has vanished?" But at the end of this great passage there is comfort: "As when the rain-clouds disperse, and the sun shines out once more, heaven and earth are filled with a chastened light, sweet to behold, and very wonderful, so because of our lost ones, because of the old grief at their loss, the visible world is touched with a new light, a tenderness and grace and beauty not its own."

Hudson is dead; but his books remain as a splendid memorial of him, and a constant plea for the life and happi-

ness of the little wild things. In Regent's Park a fitting memorial is being erected to him : a bird-sanctuary with a little lawn and fountain-pool, where the birds he loved can be safe from man's stupidity, and teach him, perhaps, something of Hudson's own sympathy.

X

The Versatility of Mr. H. G. Wells.

Mr. H. G. Wells was once described in a phrase of astonishing insight and brilliance as the Super-man-in-the-street. It is one of those arresting phrases so searching and comprehensive that it seems at first that there is nothing left to add : one can only illustrate and exemplify. For indeed Mr. Wells is the ordinary man intensified and become articulate. He sums up in himself the attitude of all ordinary men ; each year he reflects in himself the thought and life of the present so vividly and exhaustively that one is forever exclaiming mentally, " That's just what I thought —only I couldn't have expressed it." He possesses a burning, driving curiosity about everything that interests mankind ; a versatility so great that no subject is beyond his reach ; and a power of expression that ranks him as one of the leading men of letters.

Mr. Wells was born at Bromley—the sort of place the Man-in-the-street comes from. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a draper at Windsor, and there, in an atmosphere of hose and haberdashery, he gained his first insight into the life of the young Kipps. He then became a chemist's assistant, and stored up memories that were to see the light in *Tono-Bungay*. Then, after an interval of pupil-teaching, he returned for a time to the Kipps-life at Southsea. Next he became a school-master, and obtained a knowledge of the needs of education and the inadequacy of schools, which later on he was to explain to the man-in-

the-street in the novel *Joan and Peter*. He then took a degree in science, and soon began, with articles in the *Pall Mall*, the literary career which has made his name a household word throughout the world.

The versatility of Mr. Wells is so great that one hardly knows where to begin. But at least there is one dominating interest through all his manifold and diverse works, and that interest is MAN—man in his long evolution, his upward progress from the far and unrecorded past; man and his history as told in the few brief centuries through which his chronicles have been kept; man as he is to-day, struggling in the baffling complexity of a half-developed social system, and man in the far future when he shall understand himself and all the great life problems—when he shall have made Nature his servant, and shall 'stretch out his hands among the stars.'

Mr. Wells's *History of the World* is unique among books. Other books have been written which astound one by their breadth and sweep, embracing Empires and the strife of nations—such books as Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts*, far greater works from other points of view than Mr. Wells's history. But who before him ever essayed to trace the history of the World and of Mankind from the primordial nebula to the end of the Great War, and succeeding in doing it amazingly well, without losing a sense of balance or distorting historical perspective? And in *one volume!* There are points to which scholars may dissent. No one need accept as final the belittling of Napoleon to which Wells's scorn of the conqueror and shedder of blood has led him. But taken as a whole the book is a stupendous achievement, and I doubt very much if there is another man alive who could have compassed so large a subject in so small a space without losing breadth of outlook or the balance of values. Moreover, the work is as readable as an exciting novel.

If Mr. Wells has a clear and penetrating eye for the Past,

his insight into the Present is still clearer. The fact is he is intensely curious and receptive. Every new discovery, every hopeful movement, every wave of national feeling and emotion, is caught up by him and sent back to us clarified, vital, and convincing. Whatever the object of current thought—whether it is education, or religion, or sociology, or psycho-analysis—Mr. Wells seizes upon it, masters its difficulties, and writes about it all in just such a way as half of us would have liked to express it, and the other half would like to hear it expressed. At one time it is to questions of sex and marriage and the position of women that the world is giving anxious thought;—and we are given *Anne Veronica*, *The New Machiavelli*, and *Marriage*. Perhaps it is Education—and we have *Joan and Peter*, which is far more a thoughtful and convincing treatise on education than a true novel. Moreover he does not merely say, "The teaching of history in schools is all wrong—you should do this and that." He sets to work and writes a history of the world himself, saying, as it were, "That's what I mean by history on broad lines,—not the story of noble families, obsolete laws, and bloodshed."

Perhaps it is our economic system, and the power and wealth gained through advertising. And he gives us the inimitable story of a patent medicine and the wealth that accrued from the puffing of the valueless *Tono-Bungay* stuff. Is it religion?—Wells gives us *God the Invisible King*, *The Soul of a Bishop*, and so forth. And whether it be that his intense, almost passionate belief in the destiny of the human race gives him a clearer insight of the nature of God and of the purpose of creation than is given to most men; or whether, as others would have it, Wells has made the Spirit of Man into a new god of his own, and told us all to worship this evolutionary deity, there is no doubt whatever that all he says is sincere and stimulating, and easily 'understanded of the people.'

And then the Great War. I do not believe there is another book in the language which reflects so faithfully and intimately our now-forgotten, easy-going pre-war attitude of mind—the shock of realization—the long, grinding strain of war—as the great novel *Mr. Britling Sees it Through*. There are defects in this book. Mr. Britling's love affair, for instance, is to me unreal and tiresome. But the weaknesses are more than counterbalanced by the extreme power with which our feelings during those troubled years are interpreted and made articulate.

In a word, everything that interests Mr. Wells—which means everything that interests us all—is put straight into the book on hand, illuminated by his ready pen and his brilliant intellect. So much, then, for the Past and Present. But it is as a prophet of the Future that Wells has caught popular imagination.

He deals with the future in two ways. Sometimes he is the calculating scientist, putting the 'two and two' of the present together and deducing the inevitable 'four' of days to come; sometimes he is the seer—a sort of Prometheus from Bromley—piercing the fogs of futurity and prophesying for the human race a future of unimaginable glory.

Of Wells, then, as the prophet of science: how wonderful, people say, that twelve years before the outbreak of the War Wells should have published a story in the *Strand Magazine* in which he described the Tank, and makes it the decisive factor in a great war between England and Germany! How amazing that he should have foreseen so clearly the part that aircraft was to play, and have described it with such vivid exactitude! Very wonderful, certainly; but one feels that all these things are logical deductions from facts already known. It is not second sight. It is merely uncommon-sense. It was this clear, logical faculty which made Leonardo da Vinci draw plans for aeroplanes centuries

ago; which led our own scientist, Roger Bacon, as far back as the thirteenth century, to foretell the coming of the aeroplane, the steam-ship, and the motor-car. And yet the very truth and fulfilment of these deductions is disquieting; for suppose Mr. Wells should be equally right in the social future he prophesies for the human race—those nightmare mechanical Utopias in which one considers life in terms of the switchboard? One can only shiver and hope it isn't true. Yet in *A Modern Utopia* and *New Worlds for Old* there is splendid vision; for no man sees more clearly what human society might be, what the federation of mankind might effect. Of Wells as Prometheus we will speak later.

So much, then, in very brief, for the range of his subjects. The scope of his style is equally remarkable, and you never know what the mood of his next book will be. He is greatest in his exposition of modern life; but he can play the seer—as we have seen—or delve into the far past and find gold; he can be greatly humorous, as in the story of *Mr. Polly*, or pathetically whimsical as in *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, or that most charming of all short stories *Miss Winchelsea's Heart*. He can be intensely horrible, as one will realize if one reads *The Island of Dr. Moreau;* he can apply his imagination with most telling effect as in *The Invisible Man*, *The Time Machine*, *The Food of the Gods*, and *The War of the Worlds*. And rather unexpectedly—though why, I do not quite know—except that one would not look for it even in the Super-man-in-the-street—he is a great artist in words. His word-painting is wonderful in its exact and intimate truth, yet he paints scenes and situations not 'intensely,' as the poet does, but just as the average man sees them. Once more he reflects ordinary life and thought, but it takes a great artist to do so with such conviction. One feels at home in the wilds of his Labrador just as one does in his London streets, his drapers' shops, or his laboratories. The

people in his books *live* because they are real people drawn from life with a master-pen. It is difficult to quote a passage to exemplify Mr. Wells the *Artist:* there is too much to choose from. I have been turning over the pages of book after book, but selection seemed impossible. I had almost given up trying to choose the best from so much excellence, when I came once more upon the passage describing the life of a German boy serving in a submarine during the War. It occurs in that most remarkable work, the modern Book of Job, which he calls *The Undying Fire*, and to read it is to realize that Mr. Wells is not merely a writer of extraordinary facility. He is also a great artist.

Lastly there is Mr. Wells the seer. Never is he more sincere and inspiring than when he speaks of the great destiny he foresees for the human race. If we will only believe in man's unconquerable courage, and the boundlessness of human potentiality, there is no end, no limit, to the glory that will be Man's :—

"It is not a dream I tell, but a reality. The world is for man, the stars in their courses are for man—if only he will follow the God who calls to him and take the gifts God offers. As I sit here and talk of these things to you here, they become so plain to me that I cannot understand your silence and why you do not burn—as I burn—with the fire of God's purpose. . . ."

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